GHALIB—The Man And His Verse

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GHALIB

THE MAN AND HIS VERSE

By

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DEDICATED

To

The memory of late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Minister of Education, Government of India from whom I drew the initial inspiration for undertaking the present work at the Ghalib Day function held in New Delhi in 1951 ;

To

The Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, for providing me the necessary solitude, quiet, and comfort in the Central Jail, New Delhi, through two detentions (From July 21, 1956 to July 20, 1957 and again from May 4, 1959 to May 3, 1960) for finishing the book, mostly during the latter term ;

And To

My friends Ram Chander Aggarwal, Mahmood Ali Khan Chaudhry, Syed Nazim Qutb and D. K. Sharma : to the first for making a birthday gift of a fountain pen with which the manuscript was prepared; to the second for his hawk-like eye for spotting errors and brilliant exposition of Ghalib ; to the third for his grave misgivings about the work because of his comparatively profounder understanding of the literature of the West, which later got dispelled, and to the fourth for his reluctant help in wading through a mass of material.

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INTRODUCTION

All art, literature in particular, has a two-fold purpose to serve : To portray life and to inspire and elevate it to fruitful action and quest for truth and happiness.

In poetry portrayal and not analysis is the primary purpose although the two appear to be so closely, rather inseparably, intermingled. Truly great verse must not only succeed in portraying life in its various manifestations but also try to fathom its rather unfathomable depths. Besides that it should have an inherent beauty and charm of its own. It must at once educate, enthrill and enrapture one and should be capable of being put to notes of melodious music, for poetry in essence is figurative prose conveying sensations and perceptions of the mind in musical melody.

To be great is not to be placed above humanity but to be free from life's futile partialities and demands of uninformed, misguided desire. It is to achieve that measure of equanimity and sense of proportion which enable one to discern a basic unity in all things animate and inanimate ; take life for what it is worth ; and learn to see beauty all around and discover joy even in woe. That state can be reached only through a proper understanding of the mind, through sensation and perception in relation to the environment. And that exactly has been the object and endeavour of all philosophy, all art, and all literature ;

Moghal by descent, Indian by birth, Mirza Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib is one of the greatest literary figures of the modern age. His works pulsate with a unique freshness and understanding of human mind. His poetry, both in Persian and Urdu, has charm and depth, besides being musical and helps one to achieve that measure of equanimity in life, which is so difficult to come by. His wit and sense of humour, were rather unusual for the nineteenth century India and for many even today. This volume aims at presenting an understanding picture of his life, a critical appreciation of his work and representative selection from his Diwan, collected verse, to the non-Urdu-knowing readers in India and abroad.

Translation is admittedly a difficult task. It was even more so in the present case. Ghalib wrote every thing on wine—under its exhilirating and inspiring influence—while I had to render the work into English on water alone ! But that incidentally happens to be the difference between all orignal works and their translation—the difference between aqua-pura and wine. Aqua-pura however, is more essential than wine and men have been known to get drunk even on water, and so the translation can also make a similar appeal to the uninitiated in the original. Moreover the human nature is the same the world-over, and all great thought and expression, local nuances and similes apart, should be capable of transplantation anywhere in the world and in any language. Ghalib has this universality of appeal in his work which should make him the beloved of intelligentsia and others in many lands.

Those well-versed in Urdu would recognize at a glance the original piece in the translation : The attempt has

been to give as faithful a rendering of the work as possible. Here and there the translator's privilege to drop and embellish has been exercised, but nowhere at the expense of the essence. It must, however, be made clear to the reader that Ghalib's lines have been diversely interpreted by critics and writers in India and I had to make a selection of my own for rendering. Most would agree with the selection, but there may be some who might disagree. It may, however, be stated that the slection was made after carefully weighing the various interpretations and trying to understand what could be nearest to the nature and man.

Ghalib is cosmopolitan in his out-look. His lines possess remarkable philosophical and musical qualities. His work in Persian has been published in Iran, and some translations of his lines in Russian appeared in the USSR in early days of the revolution, and many scholars there are still engaged in the study of his life and work. Unfortunately, however, he has not so so far had a proper introduction to the English-reading public in India or abroad. I hope this volume would meet a long standing need.

The work on this project began sometime in 1952. Originally it was intended to bring out a rendering of his verse only. The work, however, got stalled because of my journalistic and political activities soon after it was begun. It got restarted last year. In deference to the wishes of various friends a biography of the poet and critique of his work were also prepared. I hope the change in the original plan has been all for the good.

There is still much scope for improvement in the present work. Quite a few of Ghalib's pieces have

escaped inclusion in this volume. The printer's devil, notwithstanding the proof-reader's and author's efforts, raises his mischievous head here and there. The reader may also desire an expansion of the biographical data. Whatever the criticism or suggestions, they would be welcomed by the author, gratefully acknowledged, and utilised for improvement in the next edition.

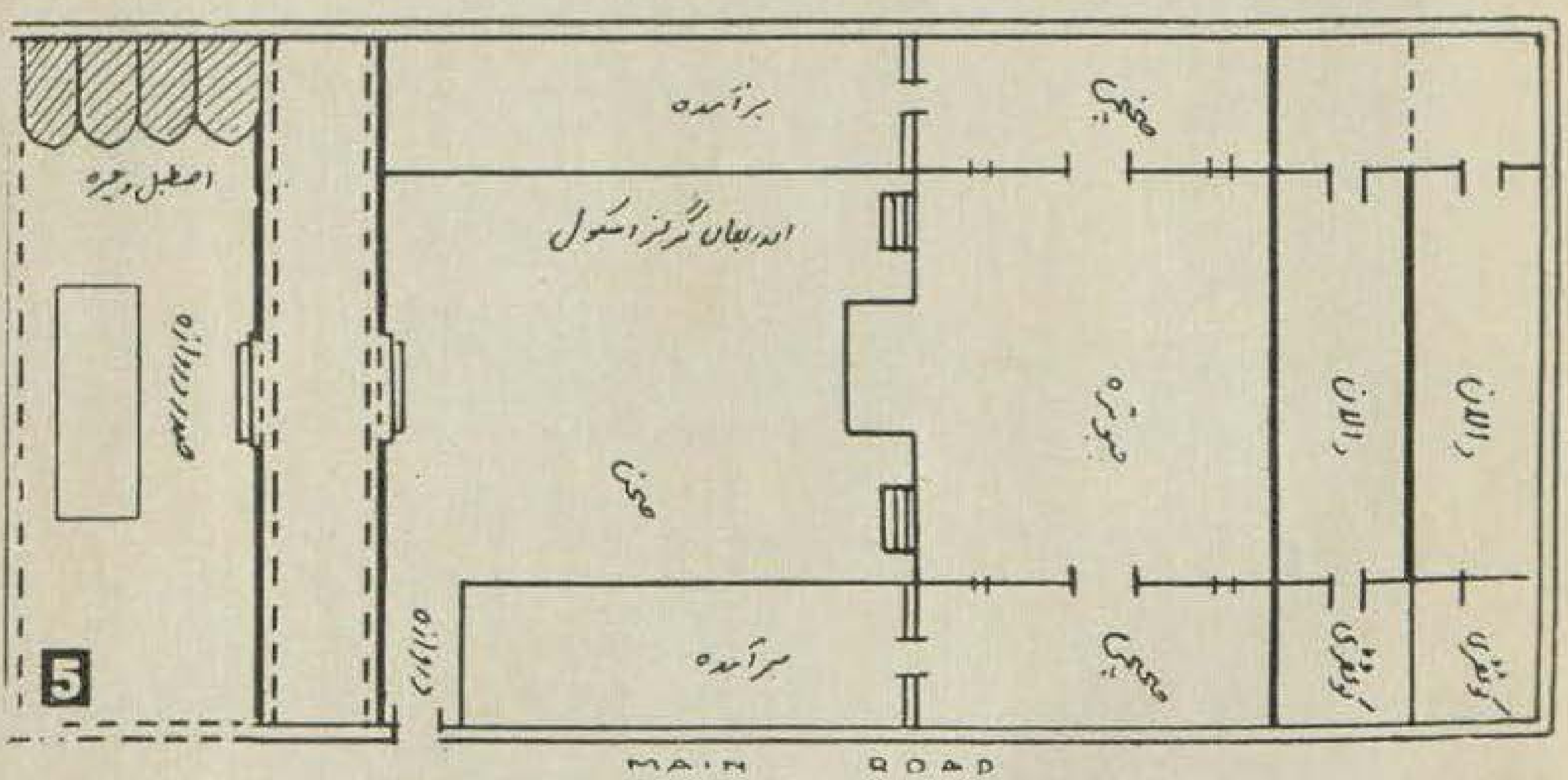
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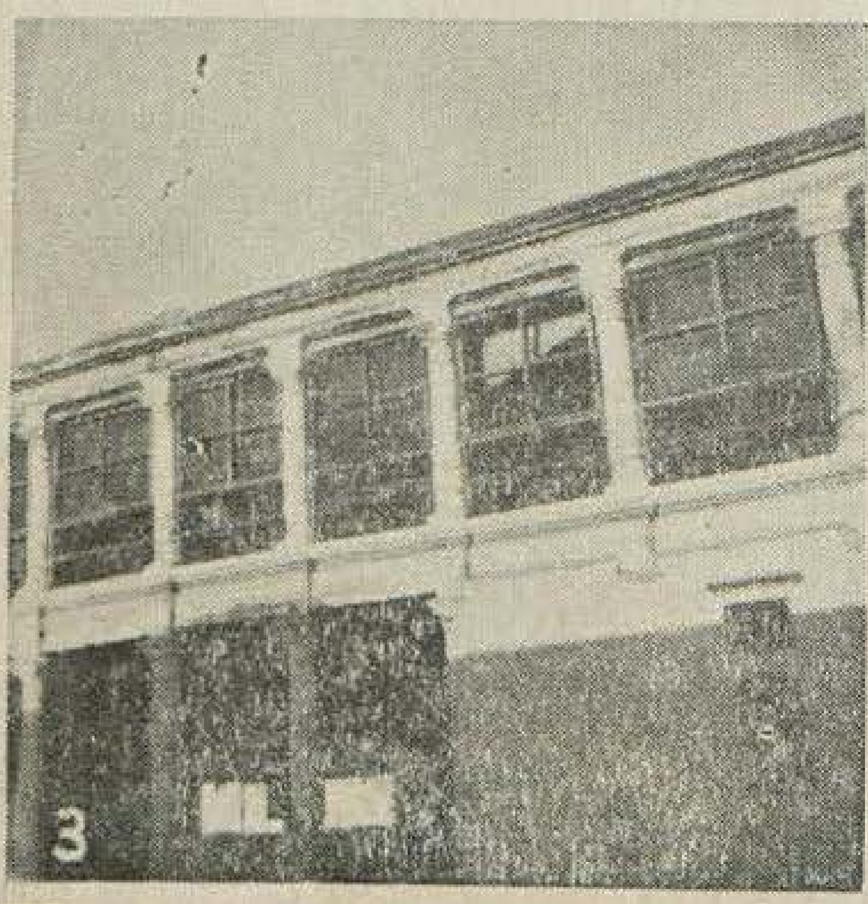
PART I

GHALIB—THE MAN


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Chapter I

The Youth At Agra

THE night was still young on December 27, 1797, when a shrill shriek from a sweet little blend of the purest white and red with finely chiselled features transformed the tense atmosphere in Kala Mahal at Agra into one of joy and cheer. Izzat-ul-Nisa, wife of Abdullah Beg Khan, a Moghul warrior, and daughter of Khwaja Ghulam Hussain, a wealthy noble of Agra, had been safely delivered at her father's residence, of her first son who in later life was to shine under the name of Ghalib as a brilliant star in the firmament of world literature and poetry.

Asad Ullah Beg Khan, (*alias* Mirza Nosha), was the full name given to the child to which he added Ghalib as his *nom de plume* as he started composing verse. He came of an illustrious family tracing its lineage to the earliest rulers of Iran, some of whom later conquered and settled in parts of Turkestan. Some quarrel with his father, Tursam Khan, the details of which are not known, made Ghalib's grandfather, Quoqan Beg Khan, leave Summercund in the lofty hinterland of Russian Turkestan and turn to India in search of a new home, fame, and fortune during the reign of Shah Alam. Here, although a stranger to the local customs and manners and not even knowing the local language—Turkish being his mother-tongue—Quoqan Beg found little difficulty in

securing for himself a high office in the service of Nawab Muen-ul-Malik at Lahore on the strength of his royal lineage. After the Nawab's death he moved to Delhi to join the service of the Emperor, Shah Alam, as a commanding officer of a cavalry unit of 50 with a Jagir for maintenance. In Delhi were born Quoqan Beg's four sons and three daughters one of whom was Mirza Abdullah Beg Khan, Ghalib's father, and another, Nasrullah Beg Khan, who brought Ghalib up after his father's death.

Abdullah Beg Khan was connected by marriage with one of the wealthiest and most illustrious families of Agra. His wife, Izzat-ul-Nisa, was the daughter of Khwaja Ghulam Hussain Khan Kamendan, a high official of the Marhatta rulers of Meerut, who also owned extensive land and property in the city of Taj. Abdullah Beg Khan himself, however, did not occupy any high office in his life. After his father's death and consequent forfeiture to the State of their Jagir, he joined the Court of Asaf-ud-daula at Lucknow, but soon after moved to Hyderabad to join the army of Nawab Nizam Ali Khan as a cavalry commander of a unit of 300. The internecine conflicts and intrigues, a characteristic feature of the Hyderabad ruling family for generations, caused his removal from this office also. He then joined the service of the Alwar ruler, but had hardly settled in the State when a petty Jagirdar raised the standard of revolt and Abdullah Beg Khan was sent to quell it. He died of a bullet shot received in the battle-field and was buried at Rajgarh. Some maintenance allowance was sanctioned by the ruler, Bakhtawar Singh, for his children

in recognition of the services rendered by Abdullah Beg to the State. According to Maulana Hali, a disciple and biographer of Ghalib, the allowance was paid to Abdullah Beg's family for several years after his death in 1802.

Ghalib was barely five when his father died. His charge now passed on to his uncle, Nasrullah Beg Khan, Subedar (Governor) of Agra in the service of Marhattas, who, after their defeat by the British, was appointed a commander of a cavalry unit of 400 by lord Lake with a personal monthly salary of Rs. 150,000 for the maintenance of the cavalry unit. Nassrullah Beg was married to the sister of Nawab Ahmed Baksh the ruler of Loharu. His wife, however, died issueless and Nasrullah Beg bestowed all the love, affection, and care on his elder brother's three children—Chhoti Khanim, Ghalib's elder sister, Asad Ullah Khan (Ghalib), and Mirza Yusuf, Ghalib's younger brother, that one would on his own. Unfortunately Nasrullah Beg also did not live long after his brother's death. He died in 1806, when Ghalib was hardly nine and the child with his brother and sister became the legal ward of Nawab Ahmed Baksh who was a great friend of Lord Lake. The Nawab, according to an order passed by Lord Lake on May 4,1806, was exempted from annual payment of Rs. 25,000 in lieu of his Jagir at Feroze-Pur Jhirka to the British on the condition that Rs. 15,000 out of it would be utilized for the maintenance of a cavalry unit of 50, and Rs. 10,000 would be spent on the upkeep and maintenance of Nasrullah Beg's dependents. A month later, however, on June 7, 1806, the Nawab

secured amendment of the order earmarking only Rs. 5,000 for the maintenance of Nasrullah Beg's dependents. Out of this Ghalib and his younger brother Yusuf were to get Rs. 1,500 ; Nasrullah Beg's mother and three sisters Rs. 1,500 and Khwaja Haji, officer in-charge of the cavalry unit of 50 and a distant relation of Ghalib Rs. 2,000 a year.

Notwithstanding legal control over him of Nasrullah Beg Khan or Nawab Ahmed Baksh, Ghalib spent most of his childhood and early youth with his mother at her father's residence. Izzat-ul-Nisa was a kindly, God-fearing and soft-spoken lady. She reared Ghalib with all the tender affection and care that a fond mother bestows on her first-born male child. But her fondness for him did not blind Izzat-ul-Nisa to her responsibilities towards the child. The untimely death of her husband and the absence of another guiding control over her son, in fact, helped accentuate her sense of responsibility. She took care to provide proper instruction to Ghalib in the traditional field of learning. He received his early education from Maulvi Mohd. Muazzam, a renowned scholar of Agra, and acquired a fairly good knowledge of Philosophy, Arabic, Astronomy and Hygiene and Physiology which at that time formed essential curricula of Islamic system of education. But the man who laid the foundations of Ghalib's profound knowledge of Persian language and literature was Maulana Abdus Samad Hormzud, a Parsi convert to Islam, who came to Ghalib's house when the boy was about 14 and stayed there for about two years as his special tutor. Hormzud is mainly responsible for the influence of Persian language and

thought on Ghalib's work. Ghalib's debt to him is acknowledged by most of the poet's contemporaries and Ghalib himself in early age although later he tries to assert that no such Mullah ever existed except in his imagination. This can, however, be safely ignored as a fitful manifestation of his extremely egoistic nature endeavouring to establish that all his gifts came from God alone and that he was not indebted to any mortal being for the development and flowering of his genius.

Not that Ghalib was not a genius. He had undoubtedly come into this world with many a natural gift, and also a rather paradoxical personality. He was a fine specimen of male beauty : tall, fair-complexioned and well-built . His features breathed an animation, a fire, and a vivid and natural intelligence rarely met in any countenance. Ghalib also combined in him a passionate lust for beauty with an insatiable hunger for truth. Despite the wander-lust in his blood and his obsession with kite-flying and chess, there was no difficulty in getting him to study. Far from that he flung himself joyfully on all forms of learning and astounded both his teachers and relations with his precociousness. He had an extremely retentive memory and a razor-sharp intellect. He also had a phenomenal capacity to grasp at a tender age the full meaning and content of deep philosophical thought which would escape many intelligent people even in their mature years.

Ghalib exhibited his fascination for poetry at a very early age. He seemed to be born with a perfect, infallible sense of rythme and a natural feeling of harmony. The

nature had further endowed him with a feeling heart, an appreciative and sensitive ear and a discerning eye besides a distinct personality of his own. His excursions into Urdu poetry began at the age of eight or nine and he started composing Persian verse when barely ten or eleven. Although his early verse is in the conventional style, his work is readily recognizable from the opening line as completely his own, denoting a determined bid to break away from the traditions of the past and blaze a new trail. His lines are not free from the characteristic defects of Urdu poetry beginning almost since its birth shortly after 1722—too much use of Persian words and similes and a debased form of erotic sentiment—but they have a distinct charm of their own. They are graceful, precise and spirited, with a marvellous correctness of composition. They clearly show the hand of the genius running counter to the prevailing mood in an endeavour to impress his personality on the age.

But Ghalib in his boyhood and youth was far from being a paragon of virtue, purity and moderation. Too much of indulgence towards him by his mother and relations and the absence of a strict male disciplinarian at home tended to make him a spoilt-child. He is stated to have been an arrogant and overbearing youth, irritable and quick-tempered. That, however, did not detract from the charm of his overall personality, for his anger would seldom last long and he was ever ready to forgive and forget the incidents of youthful rashness. Besides, he possessed a ready and pleasant wit with scintillating humour and was of an honest and care-free nature. The affluence of his relations made him as free with money as

his jokes. All this made him an excellent company. His own inborn keenness to observe life from as varied an angle as possible made him further broaden the circle of his friends, bringing him in close contact with people of various types and temperament.

Most of Ghalib's close friends at Agra were Hindus. The close connections of his relations with the Marhattas contributed in no small measure towards the development of Ghalib's completely non-communal and cosmopolitan outlook on life. His mother, herself deeply religious, had also instilled in him from early childhood a genuine regard and respect for all religions. Among his friends of youth a particular mention is made by Ghalib of Munshi Bansi Dhar with whom he "played chess till midnight" and of Raja Balwan Singh, son of Raja Chet Singh of Benares, against whom he was often "pitched in flying kites."

There were certainly others too, not so noble and high, among his friends whom the poet does not consider worthy of mention either because of their humble position in life or because of their unhealthy influence on his own character. There is little doubt, that through these un-named friends, Ghalib had an early introduction to both wine and women. There is also no doubt about his having developed an uncontrollable passion for both in the exuberance of his youth. As both wine and women were taboo in respected society of those times, Ghalib had to have recourse to both in as secret and clandestine a manner as his ingenuity could devise. Wine he could have in secret in the company of

his friends at various places of historic interest dotting round the city of Taj but for women he had no alternative to frequenting the houses of city-courtesans and dancing girls.

Whether or not Ghalib had a *genuine affair de coeur* during his stay at Agra cannot be stated with any measure of certainty. There are number of references in his own letters, written years later, to the romantic experiences of those early years of the youth. Even Nawab Azam-ud-daula, one of his contemporaries, refers to Ghalib in his Tazkira—a biographical anthology of poetry—as "an intelligent, sociable young man with a cheerful romantic bent of mind." Ghalib, however, appears to have loved so many women at so many places that one begins to doubt his capacity for constant affection for a single woman. Nevertheless he found it rather difficult to shake off the hold of women and wine on him. We find him enslaved by the love of both almost to the very end of his life although he makes a determined bid beginning with his mid-twenties, to adpot a course of rectitude and moderation. He never overcame his weakness for wine although he succeeded to a great extent in checking himself from frequenting women and houses of ill-repute and thereby saved his energies and intellect from being frittered away in useless pursuits.

Like other women his own also came into his life at an early age. Ghalib was hardly 13 when on August 9,1810, he was married in Delhi to the eleven-year old Umrao Begum, daughter of Mirza Ilahi Baksh Maaroof,

brother of Nawab Ahmed Baksh of Loharu and Ferozepur-Jhirka. A poet of eminence, Mirza Ilahi Baksb enjoyed great respect and influence in the Capital. Ghalib, however, was not happy with marriage at such an early age. The elders had arranged it to bring a sense of responsibility and maturity in the boy, which in the East has always been supposed to come as a matter of course in the wake of marriage. But there is no indication that Ghalib viewed the alliance in the same light. Instead we find him characterizing it as "marking the commencement of his worldly imprisonment, encaging of a free bird even before it has learned to wing its course through Heaven."

But the marriage was not without its benefits. In fact the advantages accruing to Ghalib from his matrimonial connections were considerable and significant. His marriage in such a respected and distinguished family of Delhi secured for him access to the highest and noblest circles of society as a matter of right. It also introduced him to the most exclusive literary circles of the age which greatly helped the development of his poetical genius. His father-in law, himself a poet of distinction, was a pupil of Zauq, the most renowned poet of the age and a teacher of Bahadur Shah Zafar, at that time Heir-apparent to the throne and later the last Emperor of India. As it was the custom at the Court to hold two Mushairas, poetical symposiums, on the 15th and the 29th of every month in the Red Fort, his father-in-law would take Ghalib there and give him an opportunity to study and appreciate the work of poetical luminaries of the age and match his own skill and

accomplishments against theirs. This naturally helped Ghalib sharpen his intellect and improve his style.

The marriage was also responsible for his shifting from Agra to Delhi. He did not move to Delhi immediately after the event but did so after two or three years of his marriage. Like his father, Ghalib was also adopted by the in-laws as one of their house inmates. Even after making Delhi as his new home Ghalib continued paying long and frequent visits to Agra. His amorous adventures at Agra, his obsession with the game of chess and his indulgence in kite-flying referred to in his letters relate to the period of his youth between the age of 17 and 20. What persuaded Ghalib to shift to his in-law's house is not clear. He had started visiting the house from the age of five or six and seems to have endeared himself to all by his intelligence and conduct. The fact that he was legally the charge of Nawab Ahmed Baksh, a brother of his father-in-law, appears to have been the decisive factor in his finally settling in Delhi. The death of his mother some years after his maturity severed his dearest link with Agra and he rarely visited the city of his birth and youth thereafter.

Chapter II

Early Days In Delhi

THE years intervening 1810 and 1826 constitute the most important period of Ghalib's life. He made Delhi his permanent home probably around 1812, at first staying in his father-in-law's house in Gali Qasim Jan but after some time shifting to a separate house behind Jama Masjid from where also he moved to a house in Haveli Shaaban Beg in Phatak Habash Khan, where, in all probability, he stayed till he undertook his journey to Calcutta in connection with his maintenance allowance settled in 1806. During these sixteen years Ghalib changed from what his critics called an 'unintelligible poet of artifice' to 'a master in the art of Urdu verse.'

Various factors contributed towards the correction of the wayward rebel of poetry and the development of his genius. Delhi stood at the cross-roads when Ghalib made it his new home. In fact the whole nation was slowly but steadily undergoing a process of revolutionary change at the time. Those days marked the end of an epoch and the beginning of a new era in Indian history. The days of the Moghuls were over, and the British rule had been firmly established in their place. Delhi no doubt still had an 'Emperor' but he was nothing more than a figure-head with a monthly allowance of Rs. 100,000, although the British were considerate enough to allow him to enjoy certain imperial privileges and

thereby to revel in the days of his lost glory. The Emperor's rule was, however, limited to his personal Jagirs and the city administration was under the strict charge of the new rulers.

But this decline in the political stature of the Emperor, did not perturb the people on the whole. The British rule in fact meant peace and prosperity for the people of Delhi. For the first time after years of lawlessness and predatory raids from various quarters, the Capital of India knew of a spell of security. That led to the revival of intellectual activity. Some historians compare this period in Indian history to the period of reformation and renaissance in European history. Delhi reflected to a great extent the strong undercurrents of the time both in the sphere of education, literature, and religion.

At the time of Ghalib's arrival in the city, Delhi was the centre of a fierce controversy about a new movement called Wahabism with most of the intellectuals ranged against each other either in support or opposition of the movement. Wahabism has been likened by some, with good deal of justification, to Luther's reformation movement. Like Luther's protest against the artificial rigidity of Christianity of the time, protagonists of Wahabism voiced their opposition to certain superficial practices of Islam, the worship of graves and mausoleums, and gave expression to the view that the Holy Prophet was not necessarily the last prophet to be sent to this world, circumstances requiring another also could be sent here by the Almighty. Shah Ismail and Syed Ahmed Brelvi were the principal leaders of the new

movement while the opposition was led by Maulvi Fazal Huq an eminent scholar of the time and a close friend of Ghalib. Ghalib, too, wrote, at the request of his friend, a piece against Wahabism although personally he appears to have been favourably inclined to it.

The city also witnessed another controversy about the need for the replacement of the classical system of education by the British system. It further found to the dismay of some a gradual decline in the use of the Persian language and its rapid replacement by Urdu with the advent of the British regime in Delhi in 1803, which year also saw the publication of an Urdu edition of the Holy Quoran by Shah Rafiuddin. Shah Rafiuddin was the son of Shah Wali Ullah who in 1737 A.D. had brought out a Persian edition of the Holy Book. Shah Abdul Aziz, another eminent religious scholar of the age openly came out with a 'Fatwa' in favour of the new system of education introduced in the Government schools run on western lines.

Ghalib thus found Delhi pulsating with new intellectual and social activity. Many an inspiring personality graced the scene. Among the poets there were Shah Nasir, Zauq, and Momin; among the scholars, Shah Abdul Aziz, Shah Ismail and Syed Ahmed Brelvi ; among the men of medical science Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan, Hakim Mahmud Khan and Hakim Raza Khan and there was also the eminent critic and poet Mustafa Khan Shaifta. Besides these there were the new British administrators with whom Ghalib came in contact on account of his relations with Nawab Ahmed Baksh and also because

of his father-in-law. All this was bound to influence Ghalib in more than one way. It naturally contributed to his early maturity in the sphere of literature.

But perhaps the most powerful influence on Ghalib's early life was exercised by his father-in-law, Mirza Ilahi Baksh Maaroof, one of the most outstanding poets of the time and also a well-known mystic. Mysticism at first had little appeal for Ghalib and drew his wry comment, 'good for composing verse' but he soon felt drawn towards it and we find it reflected in several lines of his early verse. The father-in-law treated Ghalib with love and understanding and helped him reform his rather ill-got habits. Although for quite some years Ghalib continues visiting Agra and indulging in his favourite pastimes of chess, kites, wine and women, we find him making a determined bid to exercise restraint and moderation in his life. His other friends, Maulvi Fazal Huq and Mirza Khani Kotwal of Delhi also helped him overcome his waywardness. Under their advice and influence he practically gave up connections with women of ill-repute and even in respect of wine he seems to have adopted as his guide the maxim of Omar Khayam that 'wine is something to be had at times particular, in private, and not in public.' According to Hali, Ghalib's disciple and earliest biographer, the poet felt sorry for this weakness, but this impression is not borne out either by Ghalib's letters or his poetical works. But whether or not Ghalib considered wine an evil and was ashamed of it, he certainly made a heroic effort to give up excessive drinking and stick to a prescribed schedule and quantity from his standpoint, although it may appear

to be neither moderate nor proper to people today.

Apart from influencing his life in these spheres, his father-in-law and friends, particularly Maulana Fazal Huq and Mirza Khani Kotwal, were instrumental in making Ghalib abandon his highly Persianised and artificial style of poetry. His critics also had a hand in the change. The critics, however, could not have effected any change in him, if his friends whose opinion he valued highly had also not thrown their weight behind them. For, he never hesitated to refer to critics as fools, but considered his friends as masters of the art.

Ghalib probably had the first shock of his life at some poetical symposium in Delhi where he recited his verse. Poetical symposiums were the rage of the day. Two symposiums were held at the Red Fort under the auspices of the Emperor every month and at least one at Anglo-Arabic College, also known as Delhi College. Besides these, many were held in private homes. As son-in-law of a poet of eminence he was invited to practically all of them. And highly egoistical as he was, with a deep resonant voice and charming personality, he attended and participated in them in the hope of carrying the audience off its feet, but as a rule found a cold and discouraging response. At first there were murmurs of disapproval, soon they gave way to open criticism and then ridicule. The verse, it was said, was without meaning and unintelligible. To which Ghalib at first retorted :—

"I desire no praise, I wish no award for me,

If my verse be without meaning, well, so let it be".

He had encountered sharp criticism at Agra also. But Agra did not have poets of such renown and eminence. In answer to people's criticism at Agra Ghalib had composed a quatrain which could be paraphrased as such. "Oh my heart my verse is difficult. The fools on hearing it recommend to me to adopt an easy style. It is difficult for me to say something and difficult for me not to say anything." But he was far too intelligent to bracket such eminent poets as his own father-in-law and scholars as Fazal Huq with persons he referred to as fools in Agra. It gradually dawned on him that there was something wrong with his style. And the moment he realised that he spared no effort to correct and reform himself. The word "fool" in his quatrain composed at Agra was replaced by 'the masters of verse'. He also examined his earlier verse and made several changes here and there. He had composed nearly 4,000 lines by the time he was twenty-five. Many of these he discarded later as unfit for publication in his Diwan-E-Ghalib which he prepared for publication in 1837 and which was actually published in 1841. He changed from the style of Beydil which he had followed from early childhood to that of Urfi and Zahuri, and endeavoured to put content and meaning in his verse in as simple a language as possible. With the passage of time his lines reflect more of art and less of artifice, and begin to embrace and encompass an ever-widening sphere of life.

But there was one aspect of Ghalib's life which

underwent no change. It was his personal mode of living. Used to a life of ease and luxury from his early childhood, Ghalib endeavoured almost to the very end of his life to live in a style royal. With blue blood in his veins, he could not but give first place to honour and dignity in his life and contemptuously look down upon needs of economy.

And this mistaken notion of honour and dignity made him live a life bordering on extravagance and caused him to be steeped in debt. Ghalib was always particular about his dress, food, house, and furniture. He took care to secure a house with separate entrances for males and females, if he could not get two separate adjoining houses, furnished it as well as he could and engaged on an average four servants to run the house and look after the needs of his people. He was always elegantly dressed befitting a Moghul noble, his attire comprising pyjamas, long-sleeved shirt with a muslin cap on his head in summer and woollen clothing of the same type with the addition of an achkan and fur-cap in winter. He would rarely move out except in a planquin and would carry a stick with rounded top. Sometimes he would also tie a silken handkerchief folded like a triangle round his neck with the two corners in front and the apex at the back. He was clean-shaven with long hair in his youth but turned the other way round in later years.

In matters of diet Ghalib went after quality rather than quantity. His day would begin with a glass of almond syrup. There would be no breakfast. He would have only one meal a day which was his lunch at noon. The lunch

consisted of one pound mutton-cury and bread. He was very fond of meat, chicken, pigeon, and partridges. He seldom went without mutton for lunch although he loved pulses added to mutton-cury. In the afternoon he would have fruit, among which he had a special weakness for mangoes. These he could consume without number and even in his old age we find him taking six or seven large-sized or ten or twelve medium-size mangoes. With sunset, and the Mullah's Azzan, last call for prayer, would begin his session with what he loved most, wine. During the day he would also have his appointment with lady Nicotine. There being no cigarettes in those days Hubble-bubble was the only medium of approach. He would have a few puffs at it any time he liked. He, however, never liked chewing pan-betel-leaf.

Evening was the most important part of Ghalib's day. Early in life he had no fixed hours for drinking. He would have it any time of the day or night. But after settling down as a man of the world he fixed evening as his time for drinking. And that was also the time for composing verse. He had a weakness for French wine and mentions Old Tom and Costellen as his favourite brands. He would consume on an average Rs. 5 worth of wine a day. Bearing in mind the fact that French wine sold at Rs 25 to Rs. 30 a dozen this would make his average consumption of wine to be more than two bottles. This incidentally also makes it difficult for one to reconcile himself to the view expressed by Maulana Hali, Ghalib's earliest biographer that the quantity consumed by him was not much.

Here is an eye-witness account of Ghalib's taking wine and composing verse. The writer is Mirza Mohd. Hassan Khan Bhadur Khyar, a cousin of Asif, adopted by Ghalib as his son.

"Kullu Darogah (Ghalib's servant) would clean a glass-tumbler and pour four ounces of wine in it and place it beside Ghalib. The glass would be covered with a wet piece of cloth dipped in ice-water which would drip through it. After the evening *Azaan*—the priest's call to the faithful to gather for evening prayer—Ghalib would remove the cloth and begin drinking. He would have one plate of salted almonds fried in ghee—purified butter—to hand. He would have four almonds and a sip. He would compose a piece, cross it out and write another, and so on. I have seen this happen with my own eyes". Another contemporary, Mir Afzal Ali alias Miran Sahib, writes that Ghalib would add essence of roses to the wine and take it at night either alone or in company of Mir Majruh and himself (Mir Afzal). He would then take a thousand vows never again to commit the sin. His adding essense of roses to the wine is mentioned by other writers also. Maulana Hali, however, differs from Khyar in Ghalib's mode of composing verse. According to Hali, Ghalib would compose verse while taking wine but would not reduce it to writing at the time. He would instead tie a knot in his handkerchief or some other piece of cloth and then write it out from memory in the morning. Hali also supports the account of Ghalib adding rose-water to his wine. This may have softened the effect but then the quantity consumed by Ghalib was so much that it could not have left him

unintoxicated. There, however, was never an unfortunate incident in his life arising out of his intoxication. He was never involved in a brawl or quarrel as a drunkard.

The poet had a wide circle of friends. Included among these were princes royal, renowned poets and scholars snd high officials. He was a stickler for form and etiquette. He would never fail to return a visit by a dignitary but would never call on one uninvited. He also loved writing and receiving letters. His letters written during this period were invariably in Persian. He had a constant dread of his letters being misplaced and advised his friends to post letters to him unstamped to avoid there going astray and would do that himself. He believed it was better to pay one anna and get a letter than to pay half-an-anna and lose it. With his local friends he loved to join in games of chess and cards which later brought him in trouble with the law.

Reading was another passion with Ghalib, next only to his love for wine. He was a voracious reader, but would never buy a book. He would take the books he wanted either on hire or borrow them from his friends. He would not even keep the books sent to him free as complimentary copies. These would be passed on to his friends. Books, Ghalib believed, were meant to be read and not stored. The reader should make a mental note of the important points and pass on the work to someone who might be interested in it.

Chapter III

Ghalib's Early Verse

BEFORE Ghalib moved to Delhi, a friend of his father-in-law, Nawab Hassam-Ud-din Haider Khan Bahadur, took some of his pieces of Urdu verse to Mir Taqqi Mir, the most renowned poet of the time in Lucknow for his comments. The great poet said, "If the boy gets an able guide, he will become unique and a poet incomparable to any, else he would compose non-sense."

Ghalib began composing Urdu verse at the age of eight or nine and Persian verse at the age of ten or eleven. He called himself a master of Rekhta, a Persian word literally meaning poured but in India signifying one line in Persian and the other in Urdu. Urdu itself is a Turkish word meaning army or camp and the English word horde bears close connection with it. The Moghul army stationed in Delhi from 1193 onwards was known as Urdu-i-Muallah—the Great Camp. Amir Khusro, one of the earliest composers of Urdu verse envisaged Urdu as harmonizing Hindi words with Persian melodies. Ghalib held Amir Khusro in high esteem but did not follow his simple and direct style of poetry. Instead he chose Beydil and Nasikh for his model, both known for the artificiality of their approach towards the problems of life as also for their highly involved and difficult literary style.

Urdu verse in northern India is said to have come into being around 1722 and exhibited a wholly un-Indian character both in its approach and construction almost upto the time of Ghalib, too much use of Persian words and similies, and debased form of erotic sentiment being its most outstanding characteristics. The principal forms of Urdu poetry were: the Ghazal, Qasida, Marsiya, Tazkira and Masnavi. These continue to be the principal forms of Urdu verse even today, although the twentieth century has added to them the blank verse, and poems and songs of political nature also. Urdu meter depends on quantity and not on accent as in several western languages. As compared to Greek and Latin it has fondness for long syllables. Amongst the commonest meters found in Urdu verse are: ⏑ — — —, ⏑ — — —, ⏑ — — —, ⏑ — — and — ⏑ — —, — ⏑ — —, — ⏑ — —, — ⏑ — and ⏑ — —, ⏑ — —, ⏑ — —, ⏑ —.

Ghazal is an Arabic word meaning talking to or about women. In Arabic poetry Ghazal forms part of a Qasida, the first ten or twelve couplets of a Qasida being called a Ghazal. From Arabic poetry Ghazal found its way into the Persian literature and from Persian into Urdu. Early Urdu Ghazals are found to be strictly modelled after those in Persian. In fact many an early Urdu Ghazal is nothing but a literary translation of a Ghazal in Persian. The pioneer in the field of Urdu verse, Amir Khusro, who characterized Urdu as a "musical term signifying harmonious synthesis between Hindi words and Persian melodies", wrote Ghazals with the first line in Persian and the other in Hindi and the style was followed after him by several poets. In

Ghalib's early Urdu verse also we find a marked tendency towards this style of writing—known as Rekhta—one line of a couplet being nothing but a line in Persian. With the passage of time the scope of Ghazal widened and it began to deal with subjects other than love. Ghalib helped accelerate the pace in this regard. But an overwhelming majority of Ghazals of even today has love as the main theme and women as the main subject.

Strictly speaking Ghazal is not a poem. It lacks unity and harmony in its parts. In fact it has no organic form of its own. It comprises independent disticнes or verses. Usually each couplet of a Ghazal is complete in itself although at times it may be connected with other couplets through a continuity of thought and emotion. As a rule the general connection between one couplet of a Ghazal and another is the sound of the last word or words that is to say a common rhyme which at best has a musical value. The canvas available to a Ghazal writer is rather narrow and limited. A flash, a stroke of pen, a clever and dexterous combination of words and therein may end all the intricacies of the art of Ghazal writing. But not so the craftsmanship in the case of a 'Qasida', 'Marsiya' or a 'Masnavi'. Here the field is much broader and the imagination and emotion much more sustained which naturally call for greater skill and art. A 'Qasida' is a kind of an ode. It is often a panegyric on a benefactor although it may sometimes assume the form of a poem dealing with an important event. It generally comprises twentyfive couplets but may run to the length of one hundred and seventy. The normal length of a Ghazal is ten to twenty-four lines. But while the length of the two varies so much

there is no difference in their style and rhyme. When it takes the form of a satire or denunciation it is known as 'Hiju' in Urdu.

'Marsiya' means an elegy. Early Marsiyas written by Persian and Urdu poets were nearly always written about the death of Hussain and their relations. Later they began to deal with the death of relations, friends and even other men of eminence. A 'Marsiya' is usually a piece in six-line stanzas with the rhyme *aaaabb* and may run the length of a Qasida according to the mood of the poet.

A 'Masnavi' deals with romance in poetical form. A 'Tazkira' means a biographical anthology of poetry. Few good Tazkiras have been produced in Urdu language. The best of them are good only in biographical detail. They fail to provide proper literary appreciation or criticism. Often they represent a mere collection of names with a line or two of information about each poet followed by some specimen of his work. Some Tazkiras are found to be only a history of Urdu poetry with copious illustrative extracts from the poets of the time covered.

Urdu poetry, according to one critic, is marred by more of artifice than feeling. Even where there is feeling one finds a conscious attempt to clothe it with high-brow intellect. Ghalib also suffers from this weakness in his early verse which characterizes more of intellectual exercises in the traditional field in a rather academic way than anything else. Mysticism and romanticism have been the traditional fields of poetry. Being little drawn

by mysticism, romanticism alone claimed major part of Ghalib's attention and effort. The limited canvas available to a Ghazal writer added to his difficulties and predicament. He was obsessed with a desire to be original but the peculiarities of the art of Ghazal writing—scrupulous adherence to prescribed meters and code of conventional symbols and figures of speech clogged free expression of his emotions. The difficulties encountered made Ghalib evolve a new approach and style. He never ran counter to the prescribed meter but he quite often defied prescribed diction. It was perhaps this sense of exasperation with the narrowness of field provided by a Ghazal that made him declare once that the best of him was to be found in his Qasidas and not in Ghazals. But his early Urdu verse has little of Qasidas, and even in respect of Qasidas composed by him in later part of his life for reasons mainly mercenary his statement is true only in so far as his art is concerned. There is no doubt about the best of Ghalib's poetry being in his Ghazals.

Besides Beydil, Nasikh was another of Ghalib's favourite model poets. Nasikh was very careful about the use of gender and had an extreme fondness for Persian and Arabic words. Indeed he made every possible effort to avoid the use of Hindi words in his work. Simplicity and straight-forwardness were something alien to his poetry. His influence is probably responsible for similar defects in Ghalib's early verse. Another reason appears to be Ghalib's own love for employing the field of Urdu verse as a reflection of his verse in Persian. Ghalib prided himself on his Persian verse. It was, however, his Urdu verse which ultimately won for him a unique

place of honour in the history of Indian literature.

'Asad' was the *nom de plume* adopted by him in early years of his poetry which period concludes with the year 1818—at the age of 21, although he uses it at times even in later years, and we find Ghalib used by him in some of his Ghazals of this period. But on the whole in early years he used Ghalib as his 'Takhallas'—*nom de plume*, customary to be used in the last but one line of the piece, only in Persian poetry and Asad in Urdu, while in later years he dropped the use of Asad as he found some other poet of little merit and repute using the same as his *nom de plume*.

These defects notwithstanding there is evidence of his genius even in several of his early pieces. Some of his Ghazals also have a remarkable simplicity of language and directness of approach—the outstanding characteristics of Ghalib's poetry in his mature years. The field covered is also quite extensive. For instance here is an Omar Khayam touch :

"As the cup of wine to her lips she drew,
Each drop of wine stood as on grass the dew;
Stunned with her beauty, sparkling like a pearl,
Each drop in the cup itself into a necklace did hurl."

And from this to :

"What tortures now with her to trust
My love, that each time she must

At me in such sudden rage fly
Even when she hears my rival sigh."

And here is an unusual dread of a lover even in death expressed in Ghalib's own way :

"Ghalib I dread lest I may in death with life breathe
For she would stand by my grave with finger
betwixt her teeth."

There are also the usual bemoanings and wailings of a lover. Love is invariably cruel and the lover one with a tender heart, who has nothing but woe to fall his way. Here for instance :

"My heart alone doth know
The deep wound thou hast it given :
That the man who did ever laugh,
Now to unending tears is driven."

or

"Ah me! my sights are born only me to burn
Their sparks to none else's house do ever turn."

From here he changes into a mood of prayer and says :

"It does not the Queens of beauty behove
To be cruel to those who are in love".

And when desperate he bursts into wailing :

"I would seek a cure if there were pain in my heart,
But what to do when the heart be itself smart ?

"I know full well how to pray,
But you never hear, what then to say ?"

But romanticism alone does not encompass the field of Ghalib's verse even in these early years. There are spurts of mysticism also. And from the realization of seeming futility of human effort, fatility of life, and man's unknown destiny, Ghalib tries to achieve a measure of equanimity. He appears to find joy in contentedness. Says he :

"If thou be sure of God thy prayer to grant,
Then ask for naught but a heart without a want"

And

"Both these worlds form but curling lips of despair
And hope but a house of sand that a child does prepare"

"Asad 'tis great are one's own faults to find
That helps you discover and master your mind"

"Yesterday I found Asad huddled far down in the Tavern's nook
With head on his knees, hands on his head and a heart that no joy did brook"

"Oh God call me not for my sins to account
For the heart-burns of desires unfulfilled I do recount",

But such pieces constituted only few of the exceptions to the general trend of his early verse. They only indicated to the world his tremendous potentialities and latent capabilities which drew from Mir Taqqi Mir the comment mentioned in the opening para of this chapter. For most part we find him engaged in a game of words, unusual similes, and far-fetched ideas. He appears to find pleasure in becoming more unintelligible, mistaking it for a tribute to his extraordinary intelligence and a reflection on the critic. Fortunately this mood does not seem to persist with him for long. Soon after his shifting to Delhi, he comes under a new influence, and his genius begins to shape along right lines.

Writing years later Ghalib said:—"I wrote Urdu verse from the age of fifteen to the age of twentyfive with intellectual themes. I had quite a huge Diwan—collection—to my credit. I revised it, discarded several pieces, and left a few only as an example (of early verse)".

He also mentions the correcting influence on his life of the works of Zahuri, Urfi, Naziri, Shykali and Talib. But more than these was the correcting influence exercised by his friends Maulvi Fazal Huq, Mir Khani Kotwal and his own father-in-law. That however, would have been of little avail, if Ghalib himself were not inclined to change his trend. As it happens Ghalib never accepted anyone as his Ustad—teacher—in Urdu or Persian verse as is customary with poets in the East. Nor did he write in the usual way of the poets, with works of other poets as model before them. He had orginality of approach and was usually his own

teacher, guide and critic. Ghalib appears to have abandoned the old style by the age of twenty-one and adopted the line recommended by his friends. But nothing can be stated with certainty about the years of composition of his various pieces in Diwan-E Ghalib--collection of his work. Nor is there a detailed record of his early verse. There is, however, a useful book—Shara-i-Kalam-E-Ghalib—by Maulvi Adbul Bari Asi, with interpretations of his lines composed during this period and discarded by Ghalib in later years. Maulvi Asi regards even this work of Ghalib as great and meriting serious study. But the pieces included therein bear out the critics contention that Ghalib's early work generally lacks breadth of vision, depth of thought and mastery of expression and most of the pieces are but what Ghalib himself described as the "mountain labouring and producing a mouse."

The development of Ghalib's genius from his early years provides an interesting study. From purely intellectual themes expressed in a difficult style with unusual and far-fetched similes, Ghalib slowly turns towards the problems of life and begins to express profound thought in simple language instead of putting simple ideas in difficult language as he did before. He constantly revised and improved on his own work. 'Excelsior' was his guiding motive and spirit in life. That was responsible for his emerging, with the fullest development of his genius, as a poet combining in him the philosophical outlook of Goethe, gay abandon of Omar Khyam and revolutionary spirit of Shelley. Besides he also emerges at places bitter as Theine, pessimistic

as Eurepedes, cynical as Byron, disillusioned as Swinburne and hopefully resigned as Tennyson. The universality of his work immortalises him and gives appeal and popularity to his poetry among people of all types. He looks at life from so many angles, and through glasses of so many colours that it enables people who can understand him to derive consolation, solace, enthusiasm or delight from his work according to theirindividual measure or need.

Chapter IV

The Trip To Calcutta

AROUND the year 1826 Ghalib found himself in deep financial straits. His extravagant living had caused him to be steeped in debt. Then came his father-in-law's death. And as if to bear out the maxim that troubles never come alone, his younger brother, Mirza Yusaf, turned mad around the same period and Nawab Ahmed Baksh retired into seclusion leaving his elder son, Nawab Shamsuddin Ahmed Khan incharge of the Feroze-Pur Jhirka jagir from where Ghalib and his brother used to receive their annual allowance fixed by Lord Lake in 1806. The new Nawab had none too pleasant relations with Ghalib, and that gave rise to apprehensions in Ghalib's mind, in regard to the very continuance of the allowance. Further, Nawab Ahmed Baksh's retirement meant stoppage of additional remittances, Ghalib got from time to time.

Not only that. While his liabilities increased his sources dried up. The money-lenders, previously so indulgent to him because of his high connections were now on their guard. Some creditors in fact plagued him with demands, for early payment of their loans. The changeover at the Feroze-Pur Jhirka end was responsible for their changed attitude. Ghalib too realized that loans could be taken against some surety alone. He had no landed

property to pledge. But he had for years nursed a notion that the allowance fixed for him and his other relations in 1806 was not being fully paid to him. He believed that the amount fixed was Rs. 10,000 and that Khwaja Haji was not entitled to anything out of it and even if some payment was to be made to him, it would end with his death. As, however, after Khwaja Haji's death in 1826 his share was transferred to his sons, Ghalib considered it as an act of gross injustice to him and thought that he could move the higher authorities and get his rightful due beginning with the year 1806. That would, according to his estimate fetch him an aggregate sum of Rs. 1,50,000. And that would also provide sufficient security for him to take loans from certain quarters.

A word about Khwaja Haji. He was one of three officers of the cavalry unit of 400 commanded by Ghalib's uncle, Nasrullah Beg Khan. According to one source Khwaja Haji's father was the son of Ghalib's great-grand-father. Ghalib, however, emphatically denies the connection and says that Khwaja Haji's father was only a sais of his grand-father, Qoqan Beg Khan. But Khwaja was married to the daughter of Mirza Jiwan Beg to whose son, Akbar Beg, was married the elder sister of Ghalib, Chhoti Khanim. Even this made him but a distant relation and in no way entitled to receive Rs. 2,000 out of Rs. 5,000 earmarked for the upkeep and maintenance of Ghalib's uncle, Nasrulla Beg Khan.

Ghalib had kept his peace so long for a variety of reasons. He had regards for Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan. Moreover, Rs. 750 was not all he got from the Nawab.

Gifts and remittances from the Nawab sometimes exceeded the annual allowance and he also occasionally helped him to get something from the Raja of Alwar in addition. Besides, there was his own father-in-law and several wealthy patrons. But it was different with Shamsuddin Khan. Ghalib was closely associated with Shamasuddin Ahmad Khan's step-brothers—Aminuddin Ahmad Khan and Ziauddin Ahmad Khan who were given the Loharu jagir according to the arrangement made by Nawab Ahmed Baksh Khan in 1826. There being no love lost between the step-brothers, Nawab Shamasuddin was the least favourably inclined to Ghalib, and Ghalib also considered it beneath his dignity to dance attendance on him for payment of his allowance.

The only way out was to initiate litigation for vindication of his supposed rights. But Nawab Ahmed Baksh was still alive and it was necessary to implead him as a party to any proceedings. This, Ghalib did not like and he was also advised by friends to approach him and endeavour to negotiate an amicable settlement. Consequently, he undertook a trip to Feroze-Pur Jhirka only to find the Nawab at Alwar. He stayed on to await his return. The Nawab, however, pleaded his helplessness. He also tried to dispossess Ghalib of the notion that Rs. 10,000 and not Rs. 5,000 had been sanctioned by Lord Lake for the dependents of Nasrullah Beg Khan in 1806, but all in vain. Ghalib returned to Delhi, with an added determination to secure justice for himself, and without any doubt about the righteousness of the course he was to adopt—complaining against Nawab Ahmed Baksh and involving him in litigation. He set about to complete

arrangements for his journey to Calcutta, the seat of the British Indian Government run by the Board of Directors of the East India Company with Headquarters in London.

It was to be a long and arduous journey. To traverse less than a thousand miles in India of those days was more troublesome and took longer time than it takes to go round the world twice these days. There were no trains, nor cars, nor even a regular service of hackney carriages over long distances. One either moved on foot or on horse-back. From Benares the journey to Calcutta could be performed by boat also, going down the River Ganga. It was, however, too costly for Ghalib to resort to. He, therefore, had to perform the journey mostly on horse-back. Ghalib by nature was averse to undertaking long journeys and moved out only when he could not help it. The trip to Calcutta had no charm for him by itself. It was only the hope of straightening his financial affairs that made him undergo the strain.

Ghalib seems to have left Delhi for Calcutta via Kanpur and Lucknow towards the end of July 1826, accompanied by three attendants. He had an invitation from the literateurs of Lucknow to visit the place. Ghalib of 1826 was totally different from the youngman of 1810 about whom Mir Taqqi had made the prophecy of becoming a poet unique and incomparable to any if provided the right guidance and talking rot if not. He had by now almost givən up his old involved, and difficult form of composition and embarked upon blazing a new trail in the field of Urdu verse by using simple style to convey

profound thought. He also had a year earlier prepared a brief booklet on the art of correspondence in Persian, emphasising the need for direct talk to the addressee in letter, while using language appropriate to the status of the person concerned and showing due regards for him. His famous Ghazal—"Sighs to take effect need an age : Who lives that long thy tresses to embrace" had also been composed some time before. This had caused his fame to spread to fairly distant places and brought him invitations from men of literature to visit them. He decided to utilize the opportunity provided now on account of his journey to Calcutta and make a stop-over at Lucknow. A stop-over which lasted for nearly a year—eleven months to be exact—exhibiting the leisurely manner of his living even when pressed by the need for early straightening of his affairs !

Lucknow was known at the time for its patronage of art and literature. Ghaziuddin Haider was the King of Oudh—a title assumed by him at the instance of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General, to slight the King of Delhi. Moatmud-Daula Syed Mohd. Khan—a man who started his life as cook was his Deputy. Both the King and his Deputy had some interest in literature and poetry and were known to patronise Nasikh. Syed Mohd. Khan conveyed through intermediaries to Ghalib that he would be pleased to receive him and Ghalib also showed eagerness to meet him probably in the hope of being presented to the King and getting suitable financial reward. The meeting, however, never materialized. Ghalib wanted to be received in honour by the Mir and exempted from the custom of making presents to him. To this the Agha would not

agree. The prose-panegyric which Ghalib had prepared for presentation to him was held back by him along with a Qasida, he had prepared for the King and these were presented seven or eight years later in the Court of Oudh when Nasiruddin Hyder Khan succeeded Ghaziuddin Hyder as the King and Roshanuddaula succeed Agha Mir as the Deputy. The King in appreciation ordered Rs. 5,000 to be paid to the poet, but according to Nasikh, Ghalib did not get even five pies as Rs. 3,000 were misappropriated by Roshanuddaula and Rs. 2,000 by another intermediary Munshi Mohd. Hussain.

Although he did not succeed in gaining access to the Royal Court, Ghalib was honoured by the poets of Lucknow by their arranging a special poetical symposium for him. His recitation of verse won spontaneous and rousing acclaim. He was also invited by eminent men of art and letters privately. There is no detailed account of his stay and activities in Lucknow during the eleven months he was there. It can, however, be safely surmised that he would not have stayed on there so long had not he found the atmosphere to be congenial and encouraging. He also composed some pieces of Urdu verse in Lucknow since Urdu was a greater favourite at the Royal Court there than Persian. Among these is his Ghazal wherein he says "I do not know the cause of my visit to Lucknow. I have little desire for pleasure and sightseeing. In fact I do not possess the strength to stand the strain of journeys. And added to that is my grief born out of separation from my beloved friends at home". That clearly shows his aversion to travels.

Ghalib left Lucknow for Kanpur on June 27, 1827 and reached there three days later. From Kanpur he went on to Banda where Maulvi Mohd. Ali, a high official with literary tastes, played host to him although he had no previous acquaintance with him. Here he found himself treated with love, respect and honour. Maulvi Mohd. Ali also gave him letters of introduction to various high officials in Calcutta. From Banda Ghalib sent a few Ghazals of his to some friend which are included in the margin of his manuscript of Diwan-E-Ghalib.

From Banda, Ghalib went on to Moda and from there to Chilla Tara. He performed the journey to Allahabad by boat. He had planned to stay on at Allahabad for sometime but abandoned the plan perhaps due to some unpleasant incident. His next stop now was Benares—the holy city of temples and ghats. He arrived here indisposed but soon recovered his health and cheerful spirit aided by the pleasant climate and still more pleasing sights of the city.

Ghalib found Benares, a city after his heart. He was thrilled by the glorious dawn by the River Ganga, captivated by enchanting beauties, and deeply moved and inspired by the architectural design and artistic life of Benares. The city was better by far than Delhi. He calls it the very paradise on earth and says in a letter written forty years after his visit. "Had I come here in my youth, I would have settled down here for the rest of my life." He wrote a few couplets in the city remembering his friends in Delhi and praising Benares. He had no regrets now in life, says he, except for his being forgotten

by his friends. And as for Benares he writes:—"May God save Benares from the evil eye". It is such paradise of joy and cheer. Benares appears to be the only place in India which left such an indelible impression on his mind. There are also hints of his having lost a piece of his heart to someone here.

From Benares to Calcutta the journey could best be performed by the River Ganga. That was also Ghalib's plan. But the expense entailed was beyond his means. He had reluctantly to take to horse-back again for which he shows little love. Patna and Murshidabad were the principal cities where he made brief halts *en route*. Some distance was covered in hackney-carriages. The journey finally reached its end on February 20, 1828 when he found the city of Calcutta, the seat of the Indian Government, sprawl before him. This was the city of his last hope—last hope to vindicate his rights and thereby secure the means for a life of honour and respect.

There was little difficulty in securing a house on rent in Calcutta. The house belonged to Mirza Ali Saudagar and formed part of his Haveli in Simla Bazaar near Guru's tank. The house was commodious and well ventilated with a sweet-water well in the courtyard. It was also well furnished and yet the monthly rent charged was only Rs. 10. House No. 133 in Bethune Row near the tank in Cornwallis Square marks the probable location of Saudagar's Haveli and the present tank that of Guru's tank. Simla Bazaar was the name given to the bazaar starting with Manaktala street behind the Christ Church opposite Cornwallis Square and going Northward

upto Beadon street. The Bazaar was there till the early years of the twentieth century but now the site is covered by residential buildings. The well in Ghalib's Calcutta house now House No. 133 Bethune Row was filled up and covered in 1935.

In his representation, Ghalib made five requests, first as the amount decreed by Lord Lake in 1806 for the upkeep of his uncle's dependents was Rs. 10,000 and not Rs. 5,000 per annum the same should be ordered to be paid in future, with none except the direct relations entitled to a share in it; second, the balance due from 1806 should also be made payable to the family without delay; third, his share in the allowance should be separated from others; fourth, the amount should be transferred to the State treasury so that he need not approach the Nawab of Feroze-Pur Jhirka for drawing it and fifth, a suitable title and cloak of honour be awarded to him.

Ghalib had been encouraged in his efforts by the Resident at Delhi, Sir Edward Colbrook. In Calcutta, too, he found the official attitude responsive and co-operative. The Assistant Secretary, Mr. Simon Fraser received Ghalib with due courtesy and honour and went to the extent of offering him betel and scent as token of his respect. The Chief Secretary, Mr. Andrew Sterling, exhibited similar warmth of greeting though in a somewhat restrained way. He had Ghalib's representation translated into English and presented it to the Governor-General's Council. The Council, however, felt that the representation should first be made to the Resident at Delhi and then presented to it along with the Resident's report.

It was impossible for Ghalib to undertake a journey back to Delhi and then return to Calcutta. He wrote to his lawyer, Hira Lal, at Delhi to present the representation to the Resident and send it to Calcutta with his report on it. Months passed by before Sir Edward made favourable comments in his report. Unfortunately, before the report reached Calcutta, Sir Edward was dismissed on charges of corruption and his successor Francis Hawkins, who was on intimate terms with Nawab Shamsuddin, made another report to Calcutta, holding that Ghalib was entitled to receive only what was being paid to him and nothing more. Nawab Ahmed Baksh had died in the meantime, but Nawab Shamasuddin had little difficulty on the strength of Lord Lake's second order of June 7, 1806 altering the earlier order of May 4, 1806, in convincing Hawkins about the weakness of Ghaib's case.

Hawkins' report gave a rude shock to Ghalib. It virtually pulled down his edifice of hope. But Ghalib was not a man to give up struggle easily. Moreover, he had absolutely no knowledge of the amended order of June 7, 1806, issued by Lord Lake. He considered that to be a piece of forgery. The absence of signatures in English at the end of it, as was the custom with all such documents, strengthened him in his belief. The copies of the order were also not to be found either in Delhi or at Calcutta. This he cited as a further factor raising doubts as to the genuineness of the order. But the Administration in Calcutta could not go by Ghalib's word alone. The matter, he was told, needed further probing. The genuineness or otherwise of the order could be verified from persons connected with its issue. Sir John

Malcolm now the Governor of Bombay was Secretary to Lord Lake at the time of issue of the order. The Calcutta authorities intimated to Ghalib their decision to refer the matter for verification to Sir John through the Chief Secretary of the Bombay Government. That naturally was to take some time, and finding all hope of an early settlement gone, Ghalib decided to return to Delhi motivated in the main by two considerations—firstly to cut down his unfruitful expense in Calcutta and secondly to be in a position to influence the authorities in Delhi through common friends to favour his position. Accordingly he left Calcutta after a stay of little more than eighteen months and reached Delhi on November 28, 1829.

Ghalib's efforts ultimately ended in failure. Sir John Malcolm testified to the genuineness of the order in question. The Governor-General in Council, thereupon, intimated his inability to accede to Ghalib's request. The decision was made known to the poet on January 27, 1831, but he preferred another representation soon after for review of the decision. Besides he approached the Governor of the North-West Province—comprising part of the present territories of U. P., Punjab and Delhi, for redress of his grievance. But the Governor also turned down his request on June 18, 1836. Against this decision he went in appeal to the Governor-General who also declined to reverse it. Now Ghalib made a representation for placing his case before the Board of Directors of the East-India Company in London. The papers were accordingly sent to London by 'La Belle Alliance' on May 10, 1837. The Board of Directors, too, had no word of cheer

for him. In 1842 they upheld the decision of the Governor-General in Council. Even that did not make Ghalib abandon his efforts. On July 29, 1842 he sent a memorial by way of appeal against the Board's decision to Queen Victoria through the Indian Governor-General. Except for an acknowledgment of its receipt, it brought nothing in return for him. But it was not till 1844 that he finally resigned himself to his final position and gave up all hope of getting anything in addition to what he had been getting since June 1806. His persistence with his efforts for nearly sixteen years indicates the persevering nature he possessed. But such persistence cost him dearly. The debts he incurred increased steadily. By the year 1835, they seem to have aggregated a sum of Rs. 50,000, a fairly considerable figure keeping in view the purchasing value of the Indian rupee of the time.

Ghalib's stay in Calcutta, however, was not without its rewards. Even in respect of wordly matters he was able to secure for himself a prominent place in the Viceregal Durbar. He was given tenth position in the order of precedence, a considerable position of honour indeed. He failed to get Khilaat et cetra-(cloak of honour, ordinarily comprising seven pieces with a headgear) during his visit to Calcutta but became entitled to these during the Viceroyalty of Lord Ellenborough (1842—1844). But far more than these were his gains in the sphere of art and literature. The visit opened new horizons before him and greatly broadened his out-look and view. It also invested him with new confidence in his talents and depth of knowledge of the Persian language and poetry.

Notable in this connection is a fierce controversy he set off about the authority of Qaital on Persian poetry. A poetical symposium specially arranged in his honour in the East-India Company High School in Wollesley street in Calcutta, and attended by over 5,000 people provided the occasion. Someone objected to the use of certain expressions in some couplets recited by Ghalib and cited Qaital an Indian poet of Persian language to show the incorrect usage. To this Ghalib retorted. "Which Qaital do you refer to? The Khatri boy from Faridabad? Why should I accept him as an authority"? That caused an uproar as Qaital was among the poets most popular with the Calcutta intelligentsia. Several eminent scholars in Persian including Maulvi Abdul Qadir Rampuri, Maulvi Karam Hussain Balgrami, and Maulvi Niamat Ali Azimabadi lent support to the objection. But Ghalib, too, was not without his supporters, no less eminent and acknowledged authorities on Persian language than his critics. Among these were Nawab Ali Akbar Khan Taba Tabai, Maulvi Mohd. Hussain, Maulvi Abdul Karim and an Iranian diplomat Qafait Khan, representing Prince Mirza Kamran, the ruler of Harat. The controversy spread far beyond the confines of the symposium and Ghalib appears to have evoked critical comments from people in the street also. Since such opposition could be of the least help to him in his cause, he decided to waive an olive branch and placate the Calcutta admirers of Qaital through a Masnavi—called Bad-E-Mukhalif—the breeze in opposition—penned at the probable instance of Nawab Akbar Ali and Maulvi Mohd Hassan. But even this piece while proclaiming his determination not to be the cause of a bad name for his home-town Delhi by picking up a

quarrel with people in Calcutta, and outlining the circumstances under which he was compelled to undertake his trip to the city, with the request that his indiscretions be forgiven, has a few jibes and digs, though veiled and couched in subtle expression, at Qaital. Consequently far from assauging tempers it left a considerable measure of bitterness in its trail.

Another event of some importance in Ghalib's life during his visit to Calcutta was his meeting with Maulvi Sarajuddin Ahmed. Maulvi Sarajuddin Ahmed was a man of literary tastes wielding considerable influence in official circles and was also connected with a Calcutta literary journal, Aina-i-Sikandir. Ghalib developed close relations with him and the largest number of his Persian letters is addressed to him. It was at the instance of this friend that the poet made the first selection of his Urdu and Persian verse under the title Gul-E-Raana. But this work, never got into print in book-form and only an incomplete copy of it was in the possession of late Maulana Hasrat Mohani, a noted poet-politician of India. This copy did not have the latter part of the Persian and Urdu Ghazals included in the original. The introduction and epilogue to Gul-E-Raana are, however, included in Ghalib's book Kuliyat-E-Nazam Farsi—and provide an interesting study for students of Ghalib's poetry.

Ghalib did not write many Urdu couplets during his stay in Calcutta. But he wrote a number of pieces in Persian. In fact for twenty years, from 1827 to 1847, Ghalib confined his attention to Persian verse. What made him do that cannot be stated with any measure of

certainty. He did not give up writing Urdu verse but his output in Urdu during this period is so meagre that this period can be rightly characterised as a period of his writing almost exclusively in Persian.

Calcutta influenced Ghalib in another respect also. Here the western civilization and its mode of living had its first impact on his mind. He had introduction to the highest among the officialdom and was also presented at the Viceregal Court-Durbar. He appears to have learnt the virtues of punctuality, dignity, and restraint from his new acquaintances. Besides, he did not fail to take note of the fast-changing times and the new social and political order that appeared to be round the corner. Materially he did not gain much, but intellectually the advantages accruing to him from his contact with men of arts and letters in what was commonly called the 'London of the East' were by no means inconsiderable. It helped him attain intellectual maturity. The controversy he set off at the East-India Company High School Symposium further made him delve deep into the Persian literature and grammar, perfecting his knowledge and giving him complete mastery of the language. He left Calcutta with a new confidence in himself and a considerably widened outlook on life. He had also acquired a better knowledge of the working of the minds and affairs of men. The pieces written by Ghalib, whether in Persian or Urdu, after his Calcutta trip pulsate with a new freshness and have an added charm of their own. They also cover a much broader field of life and disclose deep, penetrating insight into human mind and nature.

The Trip To Calcutta

Calcutta, too, drew Ghalib to it almost with the same force as Benares but in a different way. It was its grandeur and western mode of living that held out an attraction. He wished he had come to the city earlier, before his marriage, fully to partake of the new-found joys of life dispensed there. He writes with feeling about beauties he found on display with an abandon. He finds it difficult to resist their charms and equally difficult to forget them later in life. Although he left the city in disappointment insofar as his hopes about the case were concerned, he nurtured no feeling of bitterness either towards the city or the people involved. Instead we find him recalling his days and connections in Calcutta with tenderness and longing.

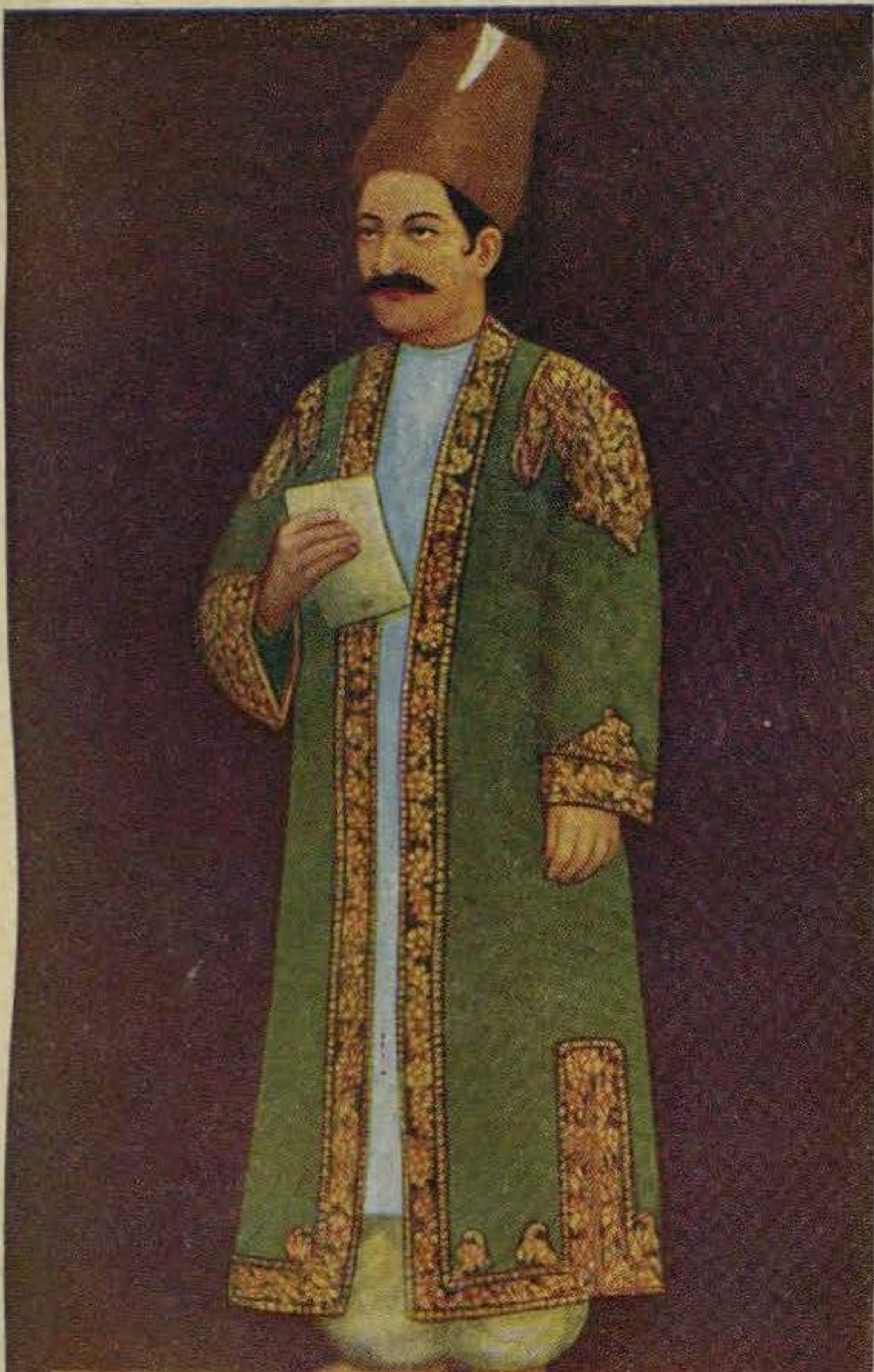
Chapter IV

In Delhi Again

DELHI found a new Ghalib on his return from Calcutta in November, 1829. He no more composed verse in Urdu and devoted all his talents to composing verse in Persian or writing Persian prose. He also displayed much wider knowledge of human nature and much greater command of his media than before. Although disappointed in his efforts he showed no streak of bitterness in his character and tried to maintain the same standard of living to which he was accustomed before his trip to Calcutta.

In fact, in that regard he never changed throughout his life. Ghalib loved good food and elegant dress. A well-furnished house with a retenu of servants was considered by him another essential requisite of dignified living. Wine, of course, was indispensible for him. He maintained two separate establishments in his house, one for the males and the other for females. The number of servants kept by him never went under six. Madari, Kulu Darogha, Kalyan, Niaz Ali and Aziz were among his male servants who stayed with him for years. There were also two maid-servants to look to the needs of his Zanankhana-female section of the house. These servants cost him on an average Rs. 60 per month, which apparently was beyond his means, considering the fact that his annual income never exceeded Rs. one hundred and sixty. But money was too small a consideration with a

THE POET



Such mystic thoughts Ghalib,
Such style and word!
Would take ye for a prophet,
If thou not a drunkard wert!

man like Ghalib, with blue-blood in his veins, and his own strong notions about the manner of living of an honourable gentleman of his standing and background.

But howsoever much may be one's disdain for considerations of money, they are bound to force themselves on one. Ghalib had left Delhi with high hopes—so high indeed as to have infected even the money-lenders who advanced loans to him to achieve his end—but returned in rather subdued spirits which also did not fail to affect his creditors. With his claim rejected by the authorities at Calcutta in 1831 virtual panic spread among them although Ghalib's appeal against the order helped in some measure in holding out a tiny ray of hope for recovering their money and getting some small amounts for him in return. By 1832, however, Ghalib appears to have found himself on the horns of a dilemma : should he join the service of some Nawab or should he continue hunting for and living on loans ? That was the question. He would have gladly joined any court in the country were someone to make an offer to him but he could not bring himself to approaching any Nawab with a request for a job. That he considered to be beneath his dignity and that stood in his way. He had, therefore, to carry on in his own independent way of financial stringency.

But that, did not stop his creditors from affecting his independece. Two of them, panicked by the failure of Ghalib's efforts to secure an increase in his allowance, initiated civil proceedings against the poet for the recovery of their loans. A decree in the sum of Rs. 5,000 was obtained by them in their favour against Ghalib in

1835. But the poet had no money to pay and that according to the laws of the time entitled the decree-holders to have his person attached and lodged in jail. He was, however, saved from that humiliation—thanks to another custom prevalent at the time of not arresting a man of eminence and honour from his residence in execution of a civil decree. He kept indoors throughout the day and would move out stealthily at night to meet friends. Total amount of debts he had incurred was around Rs. 50,000. Of his experience of this house-confinement, Ghalib wrote to Nasikh as such :—

"For the last four months the writer has been sitting behind closed doors and does not meet either his own friends or others. Although I am not in a prison, but I eat and sleep like a prisoner. The troubles and woes that I have undergone these few days are of such magnitude that if a 'Kafir' gets and stands even half of them during hundred years' stay in hell, I would call myself a 'Kafir'. The first spark to touch my patience and honour was the obtaining of a court decree by two of my creditors against me. The law is that either you pay the decree amount or go to jail. In this regard the rich and the poor stand alike. The men of eminence and fame, however, have this much consideration shown to them that the court-bailiff does not visit their house and the defendant is not arrested except when found outdoors. I could not afford the money and had perforce to stay indoors for my dignity and honour and close the door against friends and strangers alike. To this date I am thus confined, shackled by my sense of self-respect and honour.

"I was in this state of house-confinement that some cruel, non-God-fearing person—may God put him in unending pain—shot dead Mr. William Fraser, Resident of Delhi and a friend of Ghalib and freshened the woes and griefs of my father's death. I could steal out of my afore-mentioned corner only like an owl at night. So I would go to the Magistrate, whom I knew and who was my friend, now and then, at night to pass the time."

During this period Nasikh wrote to Ghalib to go to Hyderabad, Deccan, where Maharaja Chandulal showed great patronage for men of letters, and which would put an end to all his worries. Ghalib wrote back :—

"In the first place it is difficult for me to move out of here without clearing the debts. Even if I go there what appreciation can I draw from Maharaja Chandulal ? He is a total stranger to my work and so are his ears to my voice. And where Qaital is acknowledged as an authority in Persian and Shah Nazir in Urdu who would care for Ghalib and Nasikh ? Moreover he is an old man of eighty with his feet dangling in the grave. By the time I reach there he himself would have reached another world."

Fraser's murder deeply touched Ghalib. He was shot dead on the night of March 22, 1835, while on his way to his residence in Bara Hindu Rao in Delhi. The assailant escaped arrest on the spot but was apprehended soon as the Police immediately blocked all exits from the city. He turned out to be Karim Khan, Darogha-i-Shikar—Master of Hunting—of Nawab Shamasuddin of Feroze-Pur

Jhirka. Another servant of the Nawab Wasal Khan was arrested a few days later while coming to Delhi under suspicious circumstances. Still another accomplice of Karim Khan, Ena Mayo, was arrested from Secundarabad during the investigation of the case and turned an approver. The investigation revealed the Nawab's hand behind the plan. The Nawab was summoned to Delhi on April 18, 1835, by the Magistrate, Mr. Simon Fraser, who ordered him to be detained in the British Officers' Quarters outside Kashmiri Gate with five servants to attend on him, 'since his answers to the Magistrate's questions had failed to remove suspicions against him.' The Nawab's ill-will against the deceased Resident, because of the latter's support of his step brothers, Nawab Ziauddin and Aminuddin of Loharu, was considered to be the motive behind the murder. After a protracted trial Karim Khan was sentenced to death and hanged on August 26, 1835. The Magistrate also found the Nawab guilty of the abetment of the offence and opined that he deserved the same sentence. Because of his being the Ruler of a State, the Magistrate under the law had no power to award him any punishment. He, therefore, sent all the case-papers together with his judgment to the Governor-General in Council who on September 21, 1835, ordered that the Nawab be hanged for the offence and his State Feroze-Pur Jhirka be forfeited to the State. The Nawab was ultimately hanged on October 18, outside Kashmiri Gate. He was only 25 at the time.

The Nawab's hanging cast a shadow of doubt on Ghalib among the Muslim gentry of the Capital. The Nawab had denied his complicity in the offence and had

alleged that he had been implicated in the case as a result of conspiracy on the part of his opponents headed by Fatahullah Beg Khan who was a nephew of his. Since Ghalib was a close friend of the Resident and was also known to the Magistrate, Mr. Simon Fraser, whom he visited quite often during the investigation of the case, rumour spread that Ghalib had also carried tales against the Nawab. His strained relations with the Nawab, his support of Nawab's step-brothers Aminuddin and Ziauddin, whom he helped in securing administration of their estate Loharu and his claim that the Magistrate had taken him into confidence in regard to the investigation of the case, further helped strengthen suspicions against him. These suspicions, however, were entirely baseless. Ghalib had no hand in the affair. The Nawab was found guilty on the basis of statements made by the approver and duly corroborated by other witnesses. The mass of evidence against him was too overwhelming to let him escape conviction and the resultant capital punishment.

The cause of Nawab's enmity towards Mr. Fraser was this. After years of efforts he had in 1834 secured the control of Loharu given to his step-brothers—Aminuddin and Ziuddin by Nawab Ahmed Baksh in 1826 on the condition that he would pay Rs. 26,000 per annum to his brothers. The Nawab had succeeded in his efforts since Aminuddin, the administrator, had failed to deposit Rs. 5,210 annually in the account of his brother Ziuddin as laid down in the will of Nawab Ahmed Baksh and Mr. Martin the Resident had supported his claim. Mr. William Fraser, the new Resident, however, did not approve of this and advised Aminuddin to file an appeal

with the Central Government at Calcutta.

Aminuddin visited Calcutta with a number of letters of introduction given by Ghalib to his friends there. Supported by the new Resident he ultimately succeeded in his mission and Nawab Shamasuddin was directed to hand back the control of Loharu to Aminuddin. This greatly embittered the Nawab against Mr. Fraser. The hanging of the Nawab and the forfeiture of his estate caused the transfer of Ghalib's allowance account to Delhi Collectorate, which, incidentally, was one of the demands made by him in his representation to the central authorities in Calcutta.

Notwithstanding his travails and miseries, Ghalib continued his literary efforts with all his zest and fervour. He attended poetical symposiums, a large number of which was arranged from time to time in Delhi, although he would recite only Persian verse whereas others recited verse in Urdu. He also wrote a number of letters to his friends covering a wide range of subjects, and touching on the life and affairs of his time. He prepared a collection of his Persian work in 1835, under the title—'Mai-Khana-i-Arzoo'—the Tavern of Desire—but epilogue to it. was written in 1837 when a hand-written copy was prepared by Rai Chhajmal which is available in Khuda Baksh Library in Calcutta, but its first edition was published only in 1845 by Matba Dar-ul-Islam, Delhi. Nawab Ziauddin edited the work and looked through the proofs. The book had 6672 couplets in all including some 275 Ghazals. A second enlarged edition of the book under the title—Kuliyat Nazam Farsi— was issued by Munshi

Naval Kishore's Press at Agra in June, 1863. This edition contained 10,424 couplets and was priced Rs. 5. A third edition was issued by the same Press in 1893 and a fourth in 1924—both years after Ghalib's death.

Ghalib's Persian work reflects varied trends and represents writing in all styles. In his early work he exhibits as difficult and involved a style with similar unusual and far-fetched similes as characterise his early verse in Urdu. This, however, was not uncommon with other poets of Persian language also and hence did not evoke such criticism as was encountered by him in respect of his verse in Urdu, transplantation in which of similar style drew immediate notice and ridicule. His later work in Persian shows considerable improvement. Many a great thought expressed in Urdu verse is also found in Persian work, although as a rule the expression in Urdu has greater charm and directness. His Qasidas and Masnavis are completely free from the defects of his early Persian verse. The language as well as the expression there is simple and direct. There are few long poems and Qasidas in his work prepared upto 1837, and it appears that he paid greater attention to long poems after 1837, as the edition published in 1845 contains several long poems and few Ghazals composed after the preparation of the original work.

Ghalib's work of prose in Persian is no less important. As already stated he prepared a brief leaflet on the art of letter-writing in 1825, before he left for Calcutta. From Calcutta, too, he wrote to a friend in 1828 that he considered

letter-writing akin to conversation. The writer, in his opinion, should after expressing due respects and regards for the addressee come direct to the subject and address him as if he were speaking to him. But this was too revolutionary a departure from the long-established practice in Persian letter-writing to become popular and even Ghalib himself on several occasions deviated from his precept to follow the old practice of writing in a highly involved and artificial style. However, his consideration of and deliberation over the subject led to the preparation and ultimate publication by Matba-i-Sultani in1849 of a book titled 'Panj Ahang'—five parts—although work on it had been completed long before.

'Panj Ahang' comprising 492 pages is in five sections. The first section contains rules as to the proper mode of address of relations, friends and others ; the second gives rules of Persian grammar and deals with proper usage of Persian words, constructions and expressions ; the third comprises selection of Persian couplets from Ghalib's Diwan which can be used in letter-writing ; the fourth has miscellaneous writings and references to and from books, while the fifth part covers letters in Persian written by Ghalib to various friends before the days of what then was called the Mutiny of 1857 and now is referred to as the first war of Indian independence.

'Panj Ahang', particularly its fifth section is important for the students of Ghalib's life. The letters contained therein provide an important source material for his biographer. They throw a flood of light on the conditions of the time. Some of the letters give a vivid

description of the suffering of the people of the State under the rule of Moatmaduddaula in Lucknow as also of difficulties of travels during the days of his journey to Calcutta. Others convey news of the times to his friends. A correct picture of the atmosphere of the period is obtained through these letters. This section also provides an introduction to the reader to some of the most eminent men of the age whom Ghalib had among his friends. They include Nasikh, Momin, Shaifta and Neer among poets, Maulvi Fazal Huq, Maulana Sadaruddin, and Maulana Walait Hossain among the scholars and Prince Bashiruddin of Mysore, Prince Suleman Shekoh, Hassamuddin Haider Khan, Nawab Saad-ud-din Khan Shafaq, Maharaja of Alwar and Sir James Thomson among the adminstrators and members of the Royal family. The fifth section of the book was published separately in 1912 by Matba Anwar-ul-Islam as it was prescribed as a text book for students of oriental studies in Hyderabad.

But before the publication of his collected works in Persian his Diwan-E-Ghalib came out. Ghalib seems to have completed selection of his verse in Urdu by 1838 but the Diwan was issued only in 1841 by Syed-ul-Matba Press, owned by Syed Mohammed Khan Bahadur, a brother of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the noted Muslim reformer, educationist and politician of the age. This edition has an introduction in Persian by Ghalib and a note at the end by Nawab Ziauddin Ahmed Khan dated 1838 stating that the total number of couplets contained therein is 1070 while their actual number in the 1841 edition comprising 108 pages is 1095. This also indicates that the Diwan was ready for going to the Press in 1838

and 25 couplets were added to it later on before it was actually published. Ghalib sent a manuscript of this work to Rampur which is still preserved by the Public Library of the city.

The selection of verse contained in Diwan-E-Ghalib was made by the poet from his work composed uptodate, a manuscript copy of which is available in the library of Mian Faujdar Khan at Bhopal. He is said to have done so at the suggestion of his friends particularly Maulvi Fazal Huq. Some biographers of Ghalib go to the extent of stating that the poet handed over complete collection of his work to Mirza Khani Kotwal of Delhi, and Maulvi Fazal Huq, asking them to select the pieces they considered fit for inclusion in the Diwan, discarding the rest. This, however, is too much to merit credence keeping in mind the highly conceited and arrogant nature of Ghalib. It is possible for him to have been influenced by their advice to some extent in his choice but he could not have entrusted the job to anyone. As already stated he was his own critic and teacher. He always examined his own work with a critical eye and tried to improve upon it. This habit of his seems to be more responsible for his final choice than any outside influence. By 1838 Ghalib had attained enough of maturity, knowledge, experience and depth to handle a job of this nature. Several lines included in the first edition of the Diwan bear out his efforts at self-improvement. A slight change here and there in his work known as Bhopal MS adds greater charm, beauty and clarity to the meaning. Some lines are completely replaced by new ones. Difficult Persian words and expressions give

way to simple Urdu words and expressions. The changes show the hand of the master. Having completed the work, Ghalib declared that this was his only work and he had not composed any couplet or line other than that included in this edition of Diwan-E-Ghalib. A second edition was issued by Munshi Nuruddin's Press, Matba Darul Islam in May 1847, with 1159 couplets included in it. That shows the total output of Ghalib in Urdu during these nine years was only some 180 lines. In fact it was only around 1843 that Ghalib turned to Urdu verse again and started reciting it at poetical symposiums. Two of his famous Ghazals written during the period beginning with 1843 are : "Love's tortures herald peace for one's mind : As no new way of torture Heaven can now find." And "The fire of Hell has the ways of my love : Kafir would I be if I find not joy in woe."

As in his studies so also in his writings Ghalib did not care to keep a record. He would read a book and pass it on. So also he would compose a piece, recite it and hand it over to his friends Nawab Ziauddin Ahmed Khan and Mirza Zulfiqaruddin Hyder Khan alias Nazir Hussain Mirza. These two friends of his, however, took great care and pains in preparing copies of his work — both prose and verse—and preserving it. During the days of "the Mutiny"—the first war of Indian Independence—their houses were ransacked by the troops and along with their belongings hand-written copies of Ghalib's work were also destroyed. Fortunately a manuscript copy of his Diwan had been sent by Ghalib to Rampur and but for that his work might have also met the same fate as did the work of Zauq, Poet-Laureate of the

last Moghal Emperor of India. Later editions of Diwan-E-Ghalib were prepared from the Rampur Manuscript. In all five editions of Diwan-E-Ghalib appeared during the poet's life-time. The third edition was issued by Mohammed Hossain Khan, proprietor of Matba Ahmadi, Shahdara Delhi, in July 1861 and the fourth by Matba Nizami of Kanpur controlled by Mohammed Abdul Rehman Khan. The last edition of the Diwan was published by Munshi Shiv Narain, proprietor of Matba Mufid Khaliq Agra in 1863. The third edition of the Diwan contained too many proof-mistakes which made Ghalib correct them himself after the book was published and send it to the publisher who in turn sent it on to Kanpur.

The publication of Diwan-E-Ghalib won acclaim for the poet from far and near. The publication of his work in Persian four years later added to his fame and glory. They gave him a position of honour among the men of letters. But his financial difficulties did not ease much and he still looked for some way out of them. An opportunity came his way in 1842, but he declined to avail of it for reasons which shed an interesting light on his character and way of thinking.

Mr. James Tomson, Secretary to the Government of India, paid an inspection visit to Delhi College in 1842. He found no suitable arrangement for teaching Persian in the College. A decision immediately to engage an eminent scholar as head of the Persian department was taken. Mufti Sardaruddin who accompanied Mr. James Tomson on his visit to the College said that there were three acknowledged authorities and scholars of Persian in

Delhi—Mirza Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib, Hakim Momin Khan Momin and Sheikh Imam Baksh Sahbai. Mr. Tomson sent for Ghalib. The poet came in a planquin to the Secretary's residence and waited outside expecting Mr. Tomson to come and receive him. Mr. Tomson sent his Jamadar-head peon—to find out the cause of delay in Ghalib's arrival. The Jamadar brought back this reply from Ghalib:—"Since you have not come out to receive me, as has been the custom, I have refrained from entering your room." Upon this Mr. Tomson came out and told Ghalib that since he had come there to seek a job and not as a noble to attend the Durbar, he could not be extended the customary courtesies and honour due to him on such occasions. To this Ghalib replied:--"I seek Government job to add to my dynastic honour and glory and not to lose them." When Mr. Tomson expressed his inability under the rules to extend such honoured reception to him, Ghalib turned his back on him and asked the planquin-bearers to return to his residence.

This incident shows that Ghalib still considered himself a Jagirdar and a Moghul noble first and a poet and writer afterwards. His conduct may appear strange to students of Ghalib's Qasidas which are profuse in praise of even ordinary Government officials. But Qasida-writing was one thing and self-respect and dignity another for him. He could write a Qasida in praise of Mr. Tomson himself but he could not stand being slighted by his not coming to receive him.

And talking of Qasidas, Ghalib wrote one in praise of Lord Hardinge, the Governor-General, after the defeat by

the British of the Sikh army in 1846. He had earlier written 42 lines expressing great bitterness towards the Sikh army. In his Qasida in praise of Lord Hardinge he déclared that if he were young he would buckle up his arms and enter the battle-field against the Sikhs as a holy crusader. He, moreover, wants peace in Punjab for the wine of Kashmir, and that could only be under the British.

Another important work of the period undertaken by Ghalib was the composing of a Masnavi in Persian under the title "Abar-i-Gohar Bar". In Hali's opinion the work was composed by Ghalib towards the end of his life. This, however, does not appear to be correct. Several lines from it are included in his book Mehar-i-Neemroz—the Sun at Noon—which was published before March 1852. Moreover when Sir Syed Ahmad Khan wrote his book 'Aasaarul Sanaid' in 1845—15 to 16 sections of the Masnavi had been completed and one fails to find it in greater length anywhere even now. It appears Ghalib abandoned the work for some reason or the other.

Ghalib appears to have planned producing an epic. His intention was to cover the early wars and expeditions of Islam. He started in high spirits, but does not appear to have been able to continue for long. Mystic parts of it or those in praise of the Holy Prophet are of a high standard but the rest is not so note-worthy. The subject was such as did not admit of much poetic license. His own financial difficulties and preoccupations with other affairs also seem to have caused abandonment of the project.

By 1845 Ghalib shifted from his house in Phatak

Habash Khan to one in Ballimaran. He never moved out of this area till the end of his life. Mostly he resided in Gali Qasim Jan, a short distance from Chandni Chowk, and his last house was situated just under the shade of a mosque at the beginning of the street from Ballimaran side. The place now houses a coal-depot and some other artisans. A decision to acqiure the site as a national monument has been taken by the Central Government.

And it was from this area that he was arrested in 1847 on charge of gambling.

Chapter VI

The Days In Prison

GHALIB'S love for chess and dice was the cause of his imprisonment in 1847. According to Maulana Hali, Ghalib would play dice with nominal stakes and that because of strained relations between him and the City Kotwal landed the poet in jail. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, however, characterizes it as an understatement motivated by Hali's regard for his 'Master' and states that as a matter of fact Ghalib's house had become a gamblers' den. That combined with the Administration's determination to weed out gambling from the city enabled the new City Kotwal, Fazul Hassan, to have his way against Ghalib. The previous Kotwal, Mohammed Mirza Khan, alias Mirza Khani, being a close friend of the poet had overlooked his violation of the law.

According to Munshi Ghanisham Das Asi Dehlvi, the City Kotwal went in a chariot to Ghalib's house and gained entrance within along with his men posing as female visitors. Ghalib was arrested on the spot red-handed. The case came up before Kanwar Wazir Ali Khan, Magistrate, who sentenced Ghalib to undergo six months rigorous imprisonment and pay a fine of Rs. 200. If the poet failed to pay the fine, the Magistrate ordered, he would undergo imprisonment for a further period of six months and if he paid extra Rs. 50 into the State treasury, his rigorous imprisonment would he converted into simple imprisoment.

No detailed account of Ghalib's arrest and trial is available anywhere. Two brief reports about the case appear in a Bombay paper, Ahsan-Al-Akhbar, dated June 25, 1847 and July 2,1847. The first of these reports states that Ghalib was arrested as a result of false tales carried against him by his enemies. Efforts were made by many nobles of the city and even by the Imperial Court to have the proceedings dropped since Ghalib was one of the most respected citizens of Delhi but the authorities declined to intervene as the matter was sub-judice. The second report published in the paper's issue of July 2, gives an account of Ghalib's conviction and the paper's views in the following terms :—

"Judgment has been delivered in the criminal case against Mirza Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib. Mirza Sahib has been awarded a term of six months' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 200 and in case of non-payment of fine another six months. If extra Rs. 50 is paid the sentence of hard labour can be remitted. Keeping in view the fact that Mirza Sahib has been indisposed for a long time and is on light diet of chapati and soup, we are constrained to say that it is beyond Mirza Sahib's strength to stand such strain and labour. In fact there is danger to his life. It is hoped that if an appeal is filed in the Sessions Court not only the sentence will be reduced on review but even the case will be withdrawn from the court of criminal jurisdiction. It is contrary to the principles of natural justice and fair-play to award such a severe sentence for such a minor offence to a talented noble who commands respect and honour far and wide—a sentence which greatly imperils

his life."

Ghalib was lodged in the old Delhi Jail opposite Feroze-Shah Kotla. The jail building was previously known as Bhooli Bhatiari's Serai and was constructed probably in early seventeenth century by Sheikh Farid Bukhari, a noble of Akbar's Court and later Governor of Punjab during the reign of Emperor Jahangir. The poet does not appear to have spent more than three months in jail. There are conflicting accounts as to the reasons for his release before time. According to Syed Nasir Nazir Firaq it was due to the intervention of the Governor, Mr. James Tomas, or some other high official. Munshi Ghanishamdas Asi Dehlvi, however, states that it was Mr. Ross, Civil Surgeon, Delhi, who was responsible for Ghalib's release. According to Munshi Asi, Mr. Ross went on an inspection round of the jail inmates and inquired of Ghalib about his health. Ghalib recited a couplet which meant that since the day woe-beridden Ghalib was in chains he had found more of lice in his clothes than stitches of thread. Mr. Ross was "moved and immediately brought about his release by addressing a communication to the Government."

But Ghalib gives a different account. Says he:—"Kotwal was my enemy and the Magistrate a stranger. Trouble lay in wait and my stars were out of place. Although Magistrate is superior in authority to Kotwal, in my case he became his subordinate and ordered my imprisonment. Even the Sessions Judge, although he was my friend and would always treat me with affection and kindness and showed familiarity at various functions

over-looked the matter and displayed indifference. An appeal was filed with the Centre* but no body paid any attention and the order was upheld. Then for reasons unknown to me the Magistrate was moved by compassion' after half the period of the sentence was over and made a recommendation for my release to the Centre and from there came the orders for my release. The central officers praised the Magistrate for sending such a report. It is said that the kind-hearted officers told the Magistrate about my independent way of living and my unassuming nature."

Ghalib's imprisonment deeply hurt the poet. He took it as a matter of great humiliation. He was further pained by the attitude of his friends. Most of them exhibited complete indifference to him. Particularly distressing to him was the conduct of the members of Loharu's ruling family. None of them ever came to see him nor did anyone try to help. Not only that. When an Agra newspaper mentioned Ghalib as a relation of the Loharu family, they took great pains to have a correction published stating that the poet had no direct connection with their family and the connections, if any, were distant and incidental. But there was one among his friends who stood firmly by him. He was Nawab Mustafa Khan Shaifta. He did all that lay in his power to help Ghalib. He stood the entire expense of the trial and the appeal. He also met various officials in an effort to secure his release. And when all his efforts proved futile and his friend had to go to jail, Nawab Shaifta

*The word used is Saddar—The reference is probably to the Executive wing of the Government.

never failed to visit the jail every alternate day and provide Ghalib with all his necessities and require- ments.

According to Mauiana Hali, Ghalib's imprisonment was like that of a detenu. He received food and clothes from home and was not subjected to any kind of harass- ment. But the very fact of conviction and imprisonment was no less than a torture for a sensitive soul like that of Ghalib. Confinement in an old building, with men of crime all around, was also bound to tell on his nerves. Evidence of this mental pain and agony suffered by the poet is reflected in a long poem written by him in prison. The poem is referred to as Asiria—of imprison- ment—and is regarded as one of the best pieces of Ghalib. The poem, which is in Persian, comprises seven parts, each having 12 couplets. It gives a vivid account, of his arrest, and experience in prison. The account however, is not without poetic licence and exaggeration here and there. Some writers in Urdu have tried to base their account of Ghalib's days in jail on this poem. One of them has, in fact, written a small book on the sub- ject trying to disprove with quotations from the poem the statement of Maulana Hali that Ghalib's imprisonment was like that of a detenu and that he was allowed to meet friends and receive clothes and food from home. That, however, is too much to state on the basis of a poem alone. Jails almost since their inception have allowed relations to meet convicts and provide them with other amenities subject to the permission of the Superinten- dent. There is nothing surprising in Ghalib being allowed the facilities referred to above, particularly so

when the poet was undergoing simple imprisonment. Ordinarily convicts have to wear jail clothes, but with the influence wielded by Ghalib and his friends with the, Government authorities it is quite probable that Ghalib may have been allowed to wear his own clothes and receive food from outside.

According to the poem Ghalib was kept in a cell guarded by two men. An earthen lamp was kept outside the door at night. He was unable to get any sleep. That appears to be true bearing in mind the fact that those were summer months and Ghalib, like other prisoners, must have been locked up at night. Except for 'loo' —hot summer wind—There was no sign of breeze in his cell. The poet was happy that he had, by his imprisonment, been freed from the worries of food and clothing. He feels bitter about his friends and acquaintances. He tells those convicted of the offence of theft that faith and loyalty had disappeared from the city and that now he would like to be their confidant— meaning thereby that there was greater loyalty among them. To his friends he says:—

"We were sworn to love and loyalty. I am confident you stand by your vow. But you have not cared to come to me any day nor have you inquired as to how Ghalib fares. Any way let me know if you are all well.........If you cannot try for my release, your prayer is enough for me. If you have no heart in your side and cannot feel my pain and agony, you have at least a tongue in your cheek, and can use it in prayer. Although I do not deserve being remembered always,

you should sometime remember me at the poetical symposiums."

The poet, however, refers with respect and affection to Nawab Shaifta whose conduct provided the maximum of solace and comfort to him in his distress. Says he:—"Why should I bewail my sad lot. To share my woes I have God's blessing in the form of a man. There is a noble in this city because of whose sympathy I have realized my worth. I am also such a person as is being looked after by such a powerful man. As Nawab Shaifta Khan is sharing my woes in this calamity I would not be sorry even if I were to die. For now I have my patron". In another poem also Ghalib says about Nawab Shaifta:—'Before the wind can carry my wail from my corner in the prison he hears it and he can read all my thoughts without my penning them". He never forgot his debt to the Nawab. Ten years later when Shaifta was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for his alleged support of the 'mutineers", Ghalib was deeply grieved. Fortunately, the Nawab was acquitted on appeal and he went to stay with a friend in Meerut after his release. Ghalib lost no time in going to Meerut, notwithstanding the hardships of the journey, his age and frail health as also regardless of the danger of his incurring the displeasure of the Government for associating with such a suspect.

The sixth section of his poem—Asiria—gives expression to his fears about his lot after release. Addressing his friends he says: "My friend, I would hope for release, if it meant that I would not have my hand under stone,

But it would not be so. I would continue to be a prisoner even after my release. My friend, I do not regret the travails I have gone through in the custody of the British. But I dread life-long humiliation. After my release I can forget the cruelties of my enemies, but the jeers and jibes of friends would wound me like arrows. Although I have not been sentenced to life-imprisonment, yet I have received such a shock that I will now never experience joy and happiness in life." But he was confident that his talents would not be affected and that these troubles might only help sharpen his intellect.

After his release Ghalib shifted to the house of Mohammed Nasiruddin alias Mian Kale. He remained in a depressed state of mind for quite some time. Soon after his release when someone complimented him on his freedom he retorted:—"Who the devil has been released ? First I was imprisoned by the White, now I am imprisoned by the Black (Kale in Urdu means black).

Ghalib considered his imprisonment as a 'blot' on his reputation. He felt it had greatly affected his honour. So deeply pained and aggrieved was he that he felt like leaving the country as is indicated in his letter to a friend: "Since I take everything as coming from God and one cannot fight the Almighty, I do not worry about the past and am content with the future. But to wish is not against the laws of faith and worship. It is my wish that I should not remain in this world. And if I must live, I should not live in India. There is Rome, there is Egypt, there is Iran and there is

Baghdad. Let these also not be there. There is Kaaba itself, the refuge of the free, the place of the All-Kind, and the abode of the good-hearted. Let me see when I can be free from this imprisonment of trouble and need, which is more painful than the one I have undergone, and can go across the wild without any particular destination. This is what I have been through and what I desire."

That was the mood that seized him soon after his release. Fortunately it proved only a passing mood and did not much obstruct his literary activities.

Chapter VII

With The Last Moghul Emperor

Despondency and despair that gripped Ghalib after his release lasted but a while. Soon he became like gold purged of its dross. The pain and agony he had gone through, the jibes and jeers that he had faced made him take on a new depth and shed his false sense of dignity and self-respect as a Moghul noble. Gradually realization grew on him that his real worth lay in his art and not in his connections with an illustrious dynasty. That made him devote all the more attention to the development of his talents and faculties.

Fortune, too, for once appeared inclined in his favour. In less than two years of his release, Ghalib not only succeeded in removing the last Moghul Emperor's displeasure against him but also got titles from the Court and his appointment as official historian. His new connections made the poet revert to Urdu, since that was favoured much more than Persian by the Emperor.

Ghalib's presentation to the Emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, came through Kale Sahib, the Emperor's religious priest—Peer. He had access to the court for years but had not had a formal presentation. His relations with the Emperor had been strained as he had in 1834 lent support to the move made by Emperor Akbar

Shah, the Second, for having his second son Prince Salim recognized by the British as successor to him in preference to the Heir-apparent Bahadur Shah Zafar, on the ground of the latter being somewhat light-headed. The poet had in those days composed a Qasida in praise of the Emperor in which he had also praised Prince Salim calling him fit to be the Emperor of the world by training. Perhaps Zafar's love and regard for 'Zauq' were responsible for Ghalib's opposition to him. The proposal was, however, turned down by the British and Zafar succeeded his father as the Emperor in 1837. He did not forget Ghalib's role or Qasida and the poet had to express regrets and apologies to the Emperor in several Qasidas in an attempt to mollify him but without any appreciable result. Zafar continued to disfavour his presentation to the Court or appointment in any official capacity. The hostility towards him of the Emperor's nobles and the Poet-laureate Zauq also obstructed Ghalib's efforts to gain access to the Court. Zauq and others, it is said, would belittle Ghalib before the Emperor, and also make fun of the rather slim volume of his Urdu work-Diwan-E-Ghalib.

But even at the Imperial Court Ghalib was not without his supporters. Among these were the Emperor's Doctor, Ahtram-ud-Daula Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan Madar-ul-Maham and his religious head Maulana Nasir-uddin alias Mian Kale Sahib. Through Mian Kale Sahib he gained access to the Emperor. That was soon after his release. But that meant only his reciting Qasidas and Ghazals and getting gifts and rewards in appreciation

now and then. No titles or honours were conferred nor any office offered. But these, too, were not long in coming. And the man instrumental in the poet's getting these was the Royal Doctor, Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan. Zafar had an idea of getting an official history of the Timur dynasty written, and his Doctor, a great admirer of Ghalib's Persian prose, recommended the poet's name for the job. And Mian Kale Sahib, in all probability lent full support to the proposal.

Ghalib appeared before the Emperor on July 4, 1850. He was addressed by 'Zafar' as Nizam-ud-Daula Daber-ul-Malik Nizam Jung, which became his official title. The poet was formally commissioned to write the history of Timur dynasty. A sum of Rupees six hundred per annum was fixed as his remuneration. He was also directed to be given a cloak of honour comprising six pieces with three jewels. Although the official historian, Ghalib's job was to be literary in the main. Research into the subject, or collection of material were to be none of his head-aches. Responsibility for that was assigned to Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan assisted by other Court officials. Ghalib was required only to reproduce them in proper form in Persian.

The intention was to prepare a history of the Moghuls beginning with Timurlane and concluding with Bahadur Shah Zafar. In less than six months' time Ghalib finished the work upto the time of Zahiruddin Babar. In another three months—by March 1851—he covered the period upto the exile and return of Humayun, But now the Emperor changed his mind.

He wanted the history to begin from 'the beginning of the world'. Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan prepared the work upto the time of Jengiz Khan and sent it on to Ghalib. The poet translated the work into Persian and prefaced it with a chapter prepared by himself. Since the whole plan had undergone a change Ghalib decided to bring out the work in two volumes under the title Partostan—The first volume was to be called Mehar-i-Neemroz—The Sun at Noon—and the second Mah-i-Neem Mah—The Moon in the middle of the month (Full Moon). The first volume would cover the period upto and including the times of Humayun while the second would give an account of the times beginning from the reign of Akbar upto the last Moghul.

By June 1852, the history was finished upto the time of Jengiz Khan. But now Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan seemed to have become somewhat lax in his work. For well over eight or nine months no material was provided to Ghalib. It was with great difficulty that Ghalib succeeded in procuring the necessary material without further delay and completed the first volume—Mehar-i-Neemroz in August 1854. The volume was presented to the King on the occassion of Id-ul-Bakar in September 1854. Ghalib mentions this in his letter to Munshi Nabi Baksh Haqir in the following terms:—

"I did not write a Qasida on the occasion of this Id. Instead I presented a finished bound volume of the history at the Imperial Court. As for the history, it does not have the same form as before. Previously it began with Amir Timur now it begins with Adam

and evolution of the universe. I have given the book the title of "Partostan', and have divided it into two volumes. The first, from the beginning of the world upto the times of Humayun, to be called Mehar-i-Neemroz and the second, covering the period from the reign of Jalal-ud-din Akbar to the present Emperor, to be titled Mehar-i-Neem Mah. Mehar-i-Neemroz is finished and has been presented to the Emperor. I would now write Mehar-i-Neem Mah if life proves faithful to me. I have been issued a certificate of merit expressing the King's pleasure at my work. I regard it as a cloak of honour and a jagir."

As for his role as a historian, Ghalib had earlier written to someone who had addressed him certain questions connected with history: "I am such a stranger to History and Mathematics that I cannot even understand them. The Court officials prepare the material from various books in Urdu and send it to me. I translate it into Persian and return it to them. I do not have a single book (of history) with me. My worth lies only in that I can write prose and verse according to my ability. I am no historian."

The book was published soon after its presentation. It was issued by Fakhar-ul-Matba early in 1855 and was priced at Rupee one. The second volume, however, never got finished. Perhaps Ghalib was not provided the necessary material by Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan, or perhaps the Emperor did not encourage the project. Mehar-i-Neemroz had been prepared by Ghalib in a highly literary and involved style which was not

much liked by Zafar. The book from the point of view of a historian also does not have much merit. It is outstanding neither in research nor in presentation. But the real blame for that should lie with the Court officials and not Ghalib, since the poet's role in the work was primarily that of a translator and not a historian.

But Ghalib's stars were now definitely in ascendence. Notwithstanding his shortcomings as a historian and writer in respect of Mehar-i-Neemroz he gained steadily increasing confidence of members of the Royal family. His outstanding talents as a poet were mainly responsible for that. Early in 1854 the Heir-apparent to the throne, Fateh-ul-Malak Mirza Mohammad Sultan Ghulam Fakhar-ud-din Ramz alias Mirza Fakhru became his pupil and Rs. 400 per annum were fixed as the poet's remuneration. The youngest son of the Emperor, Prince Mirza Khizar Sultan soon followed suit. And the same year Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Lucknow also sanctioned an allowance of Rs. 500 in appreciation of the poet's talents as reflected in his verse recited at the Court in Lucknow. Ghalib's connections with the Lucknow Court which began years earlier brought the poet some reward only in 1852. Maulana Syeed Mohammad, a Court noble enjoying the confidence of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, helped Ghalib gain a position of honour in Lucknow.

After Zauq's death in November 1854, Ghalib became even the Emperor's tutor in a way. He would revise Zafar's work and effect the necessary corrections or improvements. Although never awarded the title

of Malak-ul-Shoara (the king of poets), his actual position was no less than that of Poet-laureate. In fact he was closer to the throne, and enjoyed greater familiarity with the Royal occupant than any other poet had before, not excluding Zauq.

Zafar's association had a healthy influence on Ghalib. The Emperor was devoutly religious and deeply interested in mystic thought and verse. That fired the poet's imagination and made him delve deep into the subject. Mystic trend of his verse becomes pronounced after his association with the Court. By 1853 he appears to have gained virtual mastery of the subject. His introduction to Mufti Hiralal's book on mystic work and thought, written the same year at the instance of the Emperor, is a brilliant work. According to Hali "none ever expressed such lofty mystic ideas in such fine Urdu prose and with such dignity and finesse as in this introduction, nor has one done that since."

The association with the Court also made him return to Urdu. No doubt he wrote several Qasidas and some Ghazals in Persian also but most of his verse during this period is in Urdu as that was favoured by the Emperor. He wrote several Qasidas in Urdu in praise of the Emperor and the princes. The most important work however, consists of his Ghazals. There is a marked difference between the Ghazals of this period and those written twenty years earlier. They have a unique simplicity and charm of their own but not at the expense of depth and greatness of thought. On the contrary simplicity of the language and style only enhance the greatness of

the work. Besides, the poet displays a delightful amalgam of wit and humour. He does not mind evoking a laugh at himself. In fact at places he appears to take delight in having a laugh at his expense. But the most outstanding characteristic of Ghazals of this period is the breadth of the poet's vision and depth of his thought. There is hardly an aspect of life, temporal, or ethereal, which remains untouched. Maximum of thought in the minimum of words is their hall-mark They bring solace, cheer, and joy to the reader. There is matter of interest for all with varied tastes.

Some of the most outstanding Ghazals of the period are : "To bed my love was not my happy lot,'; "Tis after all a heart not brick or stone;' 'After losing his heart to one why should one plaints aid seek;' 'Not all but only a few as roses and lilies do grace ;' and 'The world for me is but a child's play: With a frivolous show on night and day.'

And it was not only in his verse that he displayed such equanimity and maturity of thought. In his real life also he displayed both these qualities in no small measure. He could laugh at 'the plight of his own heart' and take a philosophical view of the tragedies of life. The elegy written on the death of his nephew Arif in 1852, and the one written about some unknown beloved of his some thirty years earlier show the development of Ghalib's mind. The piece about Arif displays the poet's characteristic humour, freshness of thought and equanimity. The elegy written thirty years earlier reflects a mind completely overwhelmed by grief. Perhaps time

had blunted the edge of grief and woe for him or perhaps their excess had made them lose their sting—bearing out the truth of his own quatrain :

'Woe ceases to be woe
If it does man oft hound ;
So many my difficulties, lo !
They have their own solution found.'

But the early days of his life at the Court were not so pleasant. Relations between him and the Poet-laureate Zauq had been uneasy for years and it took considerable time and exercise of great restraint on his part to soften them. Early in 1851 he was involved in a clash with Zauq over what is known as the 'Sehra incident'. Ghalib wrote a Sehra—a form of a Qasida read on the occasion of marriage in praise of the ornamental headgear, called Sehra, worn by the bride-groom, the last couplet of which threw a challenge to anyone to write a better piece. The couplet translated literally read : "We appreciate verse and are not supporters of Ghalib, but let us see if anyone can compose a better Sehra than this." The dig was obviously at Zauq who took it ill and so did the Emperor who asked Zauq to write another 'Sehra' accepting the challenge. The poet wrote that on the spot and had his hit at Ghalib in the last couplet which read : 'Read this out to those who claim to be connoisseurs of the art of verse and tell them that this is the way how the composers of verse write a Sehra. Zauq's 'Sehra' gained wide currency in the city with the support of Zafar. Fearing that he might incur the displeasure of

the Emperor, Ghalib wrote an apology saying that for hundred generations soldiery had been the profession of his family and that poetry was never considered by him as a means to honour. "It is by accident that something pertinent occurs in the last couplet otherwise I have no intention of severing my relations of love. That I should even entertain an idea of picking up a quarrel with the Emperor's tutor is far beyond my courage, prowess, or strength. Call me a black-face if I have someone in mind ; for I am not light-headed, wild or mad. I am a free and peace-loving man and have no quarrel with or enmity towards anyone." Incidentally Ghalib by his Sehra became its innovator in Urdu language. No Sehras had been written in Urdu before. Both Ghalib's and Zauq's Sehras were composed in connection with the marriage of Prince Jawan Bakht, younger son of the Emperor.

With the passage of time his relations with Zauq improved while those with the Emperor became increasingly friendly, rather intimate. In 1853 when a rumour spread that Zafar had embraced the Shia sect of Islam Ghalib wrote at the last Moghul's instance a Persian Masnavi—Damakh-ul-Batal—in denunciation of the rumour-mongers. He also wrote a prefatory note to the Emperor's book, 'Haqiqat-E-Mazhab Ahli Sunnat Vo Al Jamait" emphasising and praising Zafar's unshakable faith in the Sunni sect. Several of his pieces in lighter refrain bear testimony to Ghalib's intimate relations with Zafar, unclaimed by any other poet at the Court previously. Many of these relate to Rozas—fasts in Ramzan—in which Ghalib expresses his inability to observe since he lacks comforts at home and does not have anything to eat

except the fast. There is also a Qasida in praise of the Emperor pleading for payment of monthly remuneration to him as against the customary bi-annual payments "since he had to live on loans and the creditors claimed one-third of his remuneration by way of interest alone." The last couplet of the Qasida forms a famous quotation in Urdu meaning "May you live a thousand years long with each year having fifty thousand days". Hali gives an interesting ancedote in his book 'Yadgar-i-Ghalib'. The poet was having a walk with Zafar in a section of the Royal garden with mango trees laden with ripe fruit of the choicest quality reserved for the use of the Royal family alone. Ghalib looked intently at the fruit as he walked. Zafar asked him what it was that attracted his such close attention. The poet replied :" It is said that each grain of corn has the name of the person to whom it belongs writ on it. I am trying to find out if anyone of these mangoes has my name written on it. The Emperor smiled and had a basket-ful of mangoes sent to him. Ghalib would receive other dishes and preparations of the Imperial cuisine also from time to time.

Early in 1857 began Ghalib's connections with the Court at Rampur. These came through Maulvi Fazal Huq, a friend of Ghalib, who had moved to Rampur because of the patronage extended to art and literature by Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan, the ruler. Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan also accepted Ghalib as his guide in the composition of verse. The poet sent a copy of his Diwan, with pieces composed up-to-date to the Nawab and this enabled publication of later editions of the Diwan,

copies of his work in the libraries of Nawab Ziauddin and Nawab Hussain Mirza having been destroyed during the Sepoy upheavel. The connections with the Court at Rampur proved of great help to Ghalib after the Sepoy upheavel of 1857.

Around the same time as the beginning of his connections with the Court at Rampur, Ghalib tried to stabilize his future position with the British rulers. His close connections with several British officials enabled him clearly to see that the future of the Moghuls in India was sealed. As early as in 1857 an attempt was made to persuade Zafar to relinquish his rights *vis-a-vis* the East India Company, but the Moghul, obstinate as he was despite his age, declined to oblige. In 1854, it was decided that after Zafar the Royal family would stay in the neighbourhood of Qutub Minar and not in the Red Fort. Two years later in 1856, final decision to end the Moghul Rule in India was taken. Simultaneous with the recognition of Mirza Quvesh as successor to Zafar, it was made known that the future ruler will not be styled as 'Emperor' but only as 'Prince'. His pension amount was also proposed to be considerably reduced. All this made Ghalib, too, have some serious thoughts about his future. An obvious course to ensure continuance of his life of ease and luxury after the end of the Moghul rule appeared to be to entrench himself in the good books of the successors.

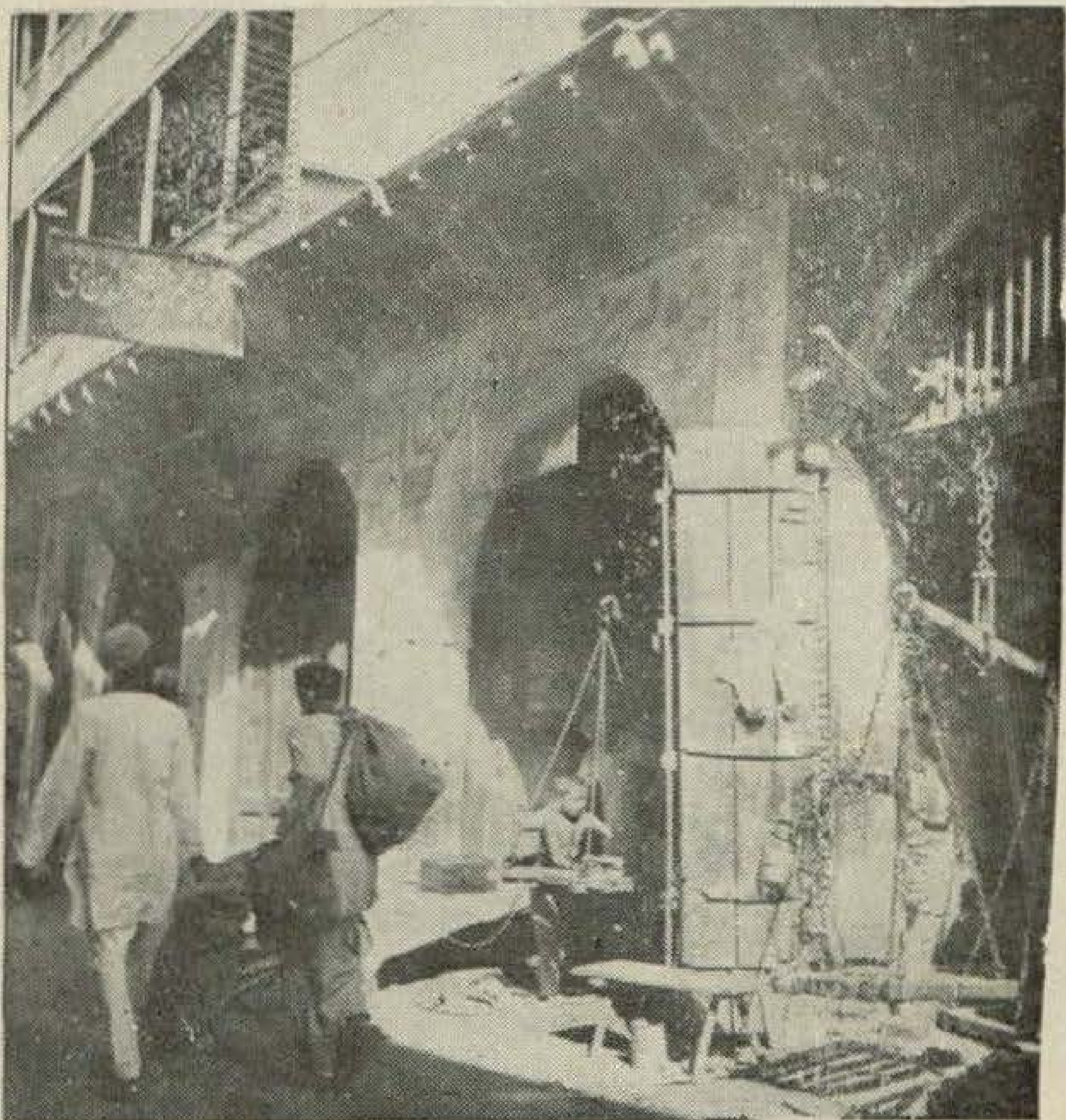
Consequently he composed a Qasida in Persian in praise of Queen Victoria of Britain and sent it to her

through the Indian Governor-General in 1856. Along with it he made a representation to the monarch for the award of a 'suitable title, cloak of honour and pension.' The petition said that since it has been a custom with the rulers of Iran, Rome and several other countries to confer titles and honours on men of letters writing in their praise ; weigh them in gold, and heap pearls and precious stones on them, this poet who has been composing verse in praise of the English ruler of late prays that he be similarly honoured with the award of title, cloak of honour and pension."

Ghalib received a reply from Mr. Russel-Brook towards the end of January 1857 which said that a decision in regard to his petition for title and robe of honour would be taken after making due inquiries in the matter. This seemed to the poet to be more than the usual acknowledgement from the Court officials and held out visions of a bright future for him. But that was not to be. His days of prosperity were gradually drawing to a close. Nawab Wajid Ali Shah was deposed in February 1856, taken from Lucknow to Calcutta and detained there. With that came to a stop his pension from the Court of Lucknow. Prince Fakhru, Heir-apparent to the throne, was struck by the cruel hand of fate on July 10, 1856 and died of cholera. That ended his allowance as the Prince's tutor. Occasional gifts and grants from the Court of Rampur made poor recompense. And then came an unexpected shattering blow to all his hopes of getting honours and pension from the English Queen. On May 10, 1857 began the Indian Sepoy upheavel which brought in its wake for Ghalib, untold

misery and affliction making him experience the "very Hell and death in life."

Where Ghalib Died



*A little distance off Chandni Chowk just around the corner where Gali Qasim Jan shoots off from **Ballimaran**, stands Ghalib's house in Delhi where he breathed his last.*

Chapter VIII

The Sepoy Upheavel And After

DELHI fell to the rebel contingents of Indian Army from Meerut on May 11, 1857. And with that fell Ghalib's star from its propitious position, putting an end to his income from the Court and enforcing on him virtual confinement at his place. This despite the fact that the poet's benefactor and employer, Bahadur Shah Zafar, had been proclaimed Emperor of India by the rebel troops.

The rebels brought death and destruction with them not only for the British residents of Delhi but also for their friends. They plunged the European quarters in a blood-bath, massacring men, women and children without the slightest compunction, and looting their property. In respect of the loot even wealthy Indian nobles were not spared. In many cases after collecting the valuables they set the houses on fire. And thereafter they marched on the Red Ford, in a wild screaming horde, demanding audience with the last Moghul and proclaiming him the Emperor of India.

A vivid account of happenings in Delhi from May 11, 1857 to August 1, 1858 is left by Ghalib in his book "Dastanbo", first published in November 1858. This is an autobiographical account of his experiences, his difficulties and tribulations as also of untold woes and troubles befalling his friends. The account begins with the fall of Delhi. The poet writes with bitterness and pain about

the excesses committed by the rebels ; their brutal knifing of the innocent children, murder of the delicate, beautiful women ; and massacre of the Englishmen. Among the British residents of Delhi murdered by these "black-faced blacks" as he calls the rebels, "someone was my friend, some my pupil, some my benefactor and some the repository of my hope", wrote Ghalib in a letter to a friend after the city was reconquered by the British on September 18, 1857.

"The Indian Army entered the city on May 11, 1857", writes Ghalib in his book Dastanbo, "And that very day I bolted the door of my house from inside and stopped moving out." Maulana Hali also says the same in his biography of the poet apparently relying on this statement. It is, however, unsafe to accept this statement as true. It is falsified by the poet's own statement to the Nawab of Rampur and also by the accounts left by his contemporaries. In his letter to Nawab Mohammed Yusuf Ali Khan of Rampur Ghalib writes : "During this upheavel (the Mutiny) I drew myself aside, but fearing that sudden severing of relations may breed suspicions and endanger life and property, I pretended to be a friend although in reality I completely dissociated myself from them and was indeed a stranger."

In fact there is reason to believe that he continued his association with the Emperor. He visited the Court and recited verse, though such occasions were indeed rare. His book, Dastanbo, however, leaves one in no doubt as to where his sympathies lay. They were certainly not with the rebels. On the contrary he was vehemently

opposed to them. Perhaps acting on the principle that discretion is better part of valour, he refrained from giving expression to his real feelings, or perhaps being uncertain about the ultimate outcome of the whole thing he tried to ensure his future interests by pretending to be a friend of the Emperor of the rebels. But as for the Emperor, he had no doubt in his mind about his real position.

Bahadur Shah Zafar was only an Emperor in name for the rebels. He was not their real ruler. "Rebels were the victors and the Emperor, the conquered" writes Ghalib. He was a mere figure-head; the high sounding ornamental title being conferred on him to serve as a cementing force for a heterogeneous mass, a rallying-point. He was not their master, but in their hands. This description of Zafar's relations with his 'Army' is borne out by the Emperor's statement made after the reconquest of Delhi that he was not the master of his free will during the period and that he was compelled to act as the rebels wanted. He was indeed helpless and could not, in fairness, be called to account for the acts he was charged with.

The Sepoy upheaval brought personal tragedy for Ghalib. His wife—fearing that their house may also be looted—sent all her gold and other valuables to the house of Mian Kale Sahib, in the hope that they would be safe there, as the rebels would not dare violate the sanctity of the residence of such a renowned priest. She did it all quietly, not even taking her husband into confidence. Her hopes, however, proved but vain. Mian Kale Sahib's house was also ravaged and along with his goods went

all the valuables of Ghalib's house. The poet had nothing but clothes and utensils left to fall back upon—he wrote later that he was "eating his clothes"—selling them to meet his needs. Besides this loss of property, Ghalib lost his younger brother, Mirza Yusuf, who had been mentally deranged for years. According to one account he was shot dead by the British troops but according to Ghalib he died of illness on October 18, after having been confined to bed with fever for five days.

"Dastanbo" gives but a brief account of events in Delhi from May 11, 1857 to September 15, 1857 the day British troops laid siege to the city, conquering it three days later. Hardly five or six pages cover this period of four months and four days. Major part of the book deals with the experiences of the poet after the British reconquest of Delhi. It is possible that Ghalib wrote a detailed account of the period when the city was under the rebels but thought it unwise to include it in the book when it was sent for publication.

If the fall of Delhi to the rebels brought death and destruction to the Europeans, its reconquest by the British spelt no less misery and affliction for its populace, particularly the Muslims. The whole city turned into a vast prison where fear and terror reigned supreme. Most of the eminent Muslims fled in terror. Their property was declared forfeit to the State. Hundreds were rounded up and scores were hanged publicly to strike awe and dread in the hearts of the erring supporters of the rebels. Several of their houses were razed to the ground. The city was virtually under martial law and a

thorough check of the antecedents of the citizens was conducted to find out the guilty during the period the city was under the rebels and award them exemplary punishments. The victorious troops, including contingents of the Indian Army from the Punjab, exhibited as much enthusiasm in collecting the spoils of victory as the rebels had done on their triumphant entry in the city. Among the victims were many of Ghalib's close friends and associates although the poet himself escaped unharmed and unmolested.

Ghalib describes the travails and tribulations of the citizens following the re-entry of the British troops in Delhi with feeling and emotion. None dared move out of his area for fear of being shot dead. No food was available in the market. In fact there was no market worth the name. And on top of that, people in his locality-Ballimaran-ran short of water. There were no wells near by. For two days and two nights they went without water and food. Fortunately for them, on the third day, Maharaja Narendar Singh of Patiala who had Hakim Mahmud Khan and his brothers as his family doctors, ordered some of his troops to the locality to stand guard over the property of Hakim Mahmud Khan. Their arrival helped allay the fears of the inhabitants. They also secured permission to go upto the end of the street in search of water. They found only a well of saline water but even that was considered a blessing although that could not satisfy anyone. Fatalist as ever, the poet assured the people that they need not lose hope "for the All-providing will not forsake us". He urged them to have faith ln God. "And

accordingly," records Ghalib, "their prayers were granted. The sky became overcast with rain-laden clouds. Soon big drops came down. It rained heavily. People collected their utensils, put them under sheets of cloth which they held above, and quenched their thirst with this elixir of life"

Notwithstanding the presence of troops from Patiala Ghalib did not escape a brush with the military authorities. On October 5, some British troops entered the locality scaling the surrounding wall and headed straight for Ghalib's house as though directed by Providence. According to the poet they did not touch anything but took him, and two sons of Arif besides some of the neighbours, straight to the Haveli of Qutub-ud-din Saudagar before Colonel Brown. The object was to prepare a record of the localities with Muslim inhabitants.

Surprised by his Iranian attire Colonel Brown asked Ghalib whether he was a Muslim. Prompt replied the poet: "I am a half-Muslim." When the Colonel exhibited further surprise Ghalib explained: "Sahib I take wine but I do not eat pork." He then assured Colonel Brown of his loyalty to the British and showed him his correspondence with Queen Victoria for the grant of a title and robe of honour. When the officers asked him if that were so then why had he not come to the Ridge where all the British troops and their supporters were gathered before laying siege to Delhi, Ghalib replied :

"The rebels would not let anyone go out, how could I then come there? Even if on some pretext or the other I were able to move out I would have been shot at by the sentry on duty at the Ridge the moment I reached near and came within his range. Let us accept that the rebels would let me move out, and the White would not shoot me. But then have a look at me and discover the truth. I am an old man, hard of hearing and stricken at the feet, neither fit for battle nor worthy of consultation. I could only pray. And pray I did even here. Moreover I was an officer of four planquin-bearers. They all forsook me."

Colonel Brown laughed and ordered the party to be escorted back to their houses.

Describing the incident in his book Dastanbo Ghalib writes : "It is is not for free men to conceal the truth. I—a half-Muslim—am as free from the fear of disgrace and ill-repute as I am of the customs and ways of the sect. For a long time it had been my habit that I would not take anything but 'French' at night, and if I did not get that I could not sleep either. Had not God-fearing, large-hearted, manly Mahesh Das sent me Indian wine similar to the 'French' in colour and still better in its smell, I could not have survived those days."

Those were indeed hard days for Ghalib. Having lost all his valuables through the folly of his wife, and all sources of his income through the cruelty of Heavens, he had nothing but his clothes to fall back upon. He

had not only to take care of himself, his wife and servants but had also to look after others whom he helped in days better off. Ghalib writes : "In these days of penury I ate up all my clothes, coverings and carpets. While others would eat bread I would eat clothes." In despair he adds later in the book : "How long shall I trouble my pen in writing this child's play (Dastanbo). In view of the present conditions, life can end either in death or in mendicancy. In case of the first eventuality this story will remain unfinished and in case of the second what would be the result except being driven off some shop and getting a few coins at another. So I have nothing but my degradation and disgrace to record in this book. Even if I get the old pension it would not do, and if I do not, that will put an end to everything. Difficulty with me is that in neither case does the climate of this city suit the broken-hearted. I will have to leave the city and take abode in some other place."

In fact but for his friends, Ghalib would have been starved to death. The first to come to his rescue was Hakim Mahmud Ali Khan who willingly helped hundreds of other people in distress. Then came Har Gopal Tafta who sent clothes and money from Agra. Besides Mahesh Das who provided him with the elixir of life, Munshi Hira Singh, Pandit Shivji Ram, and his son Balmukand were the other Hindu friends and admirers of Ghalib who helped the poet in this critical period and tried to provide as much comfort and cheer to him as could be done under the circumstances. Ghalib makes a grateful mention of them all in his book and says : 'I

have made a mention of these gentlemen as it is but meet to express my gratitude to them for their acts of kindness and also as I wish my friends to know how a man with such a large number of friends as I, fared during those days. Were these four gentlemen not to be in the city nobody could have stood testimony to my helplessness."

"Dastanbo" further details the misfortunes and troubles that befell Ghalib's friends. Nawab Ziauddin and Aminuddin left Delhi for Loharu during the first week of Delhi's conquest by the British but had hardly reached Mehrauli when they were surrounded by the Indian troops and deprived of all their belongings except the clothes they were wearing. Their houses were plundered in the city. The same fate befell Mazharuddin Hyder Khan and Zulfiqar Haider Khan But whereas other people's houses stood intact, their's were set afire and not a trace of them was left behind. That meant a grievous loss for Ghalib. For in their houses were stored copies of his collected works. In a letter to a friend Ghalib wrote : "Bhai Ziauddin Khan Sahib, and Nazir Hussain Mirza would collect pieces of Urdu and Persian verse and prose from me. Houses of both of them have been plundered. Neither the books remain there nor the valuables." As stated earlier but for his having sent a manuscript copy of his Urdu work to Rampur shortly before the Sepoy upheavel this would have meant irreparable loss to Urdu literature. Even as such several of his letters in Persian and some pieces of his verse also were lost for good.

Nawab Mustafa Khan Shaifta, Mufti Sadar-ud-din and Maulvi Fazal Huq Khairabadi were among the other friends of Ghalib who underwent great suffering as a result of the Sepoy revolt. Nawab Shaifta was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment and Maulvi Fazal Huq exiled for life to Rangoon. Mufti Sadar-ud-din stood trial for a long time and his property was ordered forfeit to the State. Nawab Shaifta was acquitted on appeal. Maulvi Fazal Huq's son succeeded in securing an order for the release of his father but before the order reached Rangoon the Maulvi had left the world. On appeal Mufti Sadar-ud-din got half of his property restored. Ghalib felt the suffering of his friends as deeply as if they were his own. He was particularly distressed and pained by the misfortunes befalling Nawab Shaifta, who had been of such help to him during his days in prison in 1847. He lost no time in rushing to Meerut the moment he learned that the Nawab had been acquitted on appeal and had arrived there for a brief stay.

Ghalib had expected peace and normalcy to return in a few month's time. But that did not happen for years. It took more than three months before Hindus got permission to visit and reside in the city on January 1, 1858. But it was only towards the end of that year that the Muslims were accorded similar privilege. Orders for the restoration of Muslim properties to the owners were issued and announced on the occasion of the Governor-General's Durbar held in Meerut in December 1858. But the city remained a city of ominous silence and suffering for several years to come. A graphic picture of the place and times is drawn by Ghalib in several of his letters.

In a letter to Munshi Hargopal Tafta, he writes: "Sahib, do you know what is all this and what has happened. It was in another life's time that we were each-other's friends, experienced mutual love and affection, recited verse and collected our works. There was another old gentleman who was our mutual friend. Munshi Nabi Baksh was his name and Haqir his nom de plume. Suddenly the times changed. All those affairs and men were no more. Nor had we those associations, nor those moments of happiness. After an age we were born into another life. Although in its appearance this life bears exact resemblance to the former—that is I sent a letter to Munshi Nabi Baksh and received a reply from him and received a letter from you today discovering that you are also Munshi Hargopal with Tafta as your nom de plume, and further still the city where I reside is also called Delhi and the mohallah is named Ballimaran—yet you do not find a single one among the old friends. By God, howsoever much you may search for them, you shall not find a single Muslim here either among the rich or the poor or among the men of letters." This was soon after the reconquest of Delhi.

Shortly afterwards he wrote to Nawab Alauddin Khan: "yesterday I came across a sentence at two places in your letter that Delhi is a big city and that there would be all types of people there. My dear, this is not that Delhi where you were born; not that Delhi where you received your education and where you came to me for studies in the Haveli of Shaaban Beg. Not that Delhi which I visited from the age of seven, nor that Delhi where I stayed for fifty-one years. It is an Army camp where you find

a few Muslims in service and the rest are all Hindus. King's men that are safe get Rupees five per month...... Buildings have been pulled down. How can you find a man of art here."

When town-duty was imposed in November 1858, Ghalib wrote : "They held a council about town-duty which came into force day before yesterday, on November 7. Salig Ram Khazanchi, Chhanna Mal and Mahesh Das have been entrusted with the task of collection. Except for the cowdung cakes and the corn there is hardly a good which is not subject to town-duty. Men are allowed to reside here now and they are in great number. Formerly the order was that only the house-owners may stay. Since the day before yesterday it has been ordered that tenants may also reside in the city. Do not take that to mean that we can keep tenants in our house. It only means that those who did not own a house but had been tenants for years can also come to the town but they must pay the rent to the State." This was before the Governor-General's Durbar in Meerut. After that the Muslims became entitled to restoration of their properties.

Still another letter to Mir Mehdi Majruh who repeatedly asked the poet about life in Delhi after 1857 says :" "The day before yesterday I went in a planquin to find out the state of the well. Without exaggeration, it is a complete wildnerness from Jama Masjid to the Rajghat gate. There are piles of bricks lying all around. If they are removed it would become plain like death, with silence of the grave. Just recall to your mind the lengthy depression on the other side of Mirza Gohar's garden. Now it

is on level with the garden platform. The Rajghat gate is closed. The city wall has only the eyelets in the top open, the rest is all covered. You have seen the state of affairs at Kashmeri gate. Now from the Calcutta gate to the Kabuli gate the whole surface has been levelled plain for a metalled road. And not a sign is to be found of the Punjabi Katra, Dhobiwara, Ramji Gunj, Saaddat Khan Katra, Jarnail Ki Bibi Ki Haveli, the go-downs of Ramji Das and Sahib Ram's Bagh and Haveli. In brief the city has become a desert. And now if even the wells disappear and the water becomes a rarity, this desert will become the desert of Karbala. And may the Lord be praised, the people of Delhi still consider the city language to be good. Ah ! the wishful thinking and the blind faith ! Ye Man of God, there is no Urdu Bazaar now, where can you find Urdu then ? Where is Delhi ? By God, it is not a city now. It is a camp. It is a cantonment. There is neither Fort, nor city, nor bazaar, nor the canal." Again towards the end of January 1860 the poet wrote : "Dear brother, what do you ask and what should I write ? Delhi's existence depends on various activities : Fort, Chandni Chowk, daily crowds at Jama Masjid, a weekly stroll by the Jumna Bridge, and an annual fair of the flower-vendors. None of these five things is there now. Where is Delhi then ?"

Along with other Muslims Ghalib felt concerned about the fate of Jama Masjid. For a while the Government considered a proposal for its demolition and construction of a church in its place. Fortunately the proposal was dropped. The famous mosque, however, remained in the custody of the State till 1862. On December 16, Ghalib

sent to a friend the happy tidings of its restoration to the priests. Wrote he: "The Jama Masjid has been restored. On the steps facing the Chitli Qabar, the Kababis have built their shops. Eggs, hens, and pigeons have begun to be sold there. Ten people have been put in charge of the management—Mirza Ilahi Baksh, Maulvi Sadaruddin, Taffazil Hussain Khan and seven others besides these three. On November 7, Friday, this year Abu-ul-Zafar Sarajuddin Bahadur Shah was released from the prison of his life and the imprisonment of the British."

Some of Ghalib's letters have also a dig at the Punjab Administration which was in charge of Delhi. Says he in one : "Do not you imagine for a moment that the Delhi Administration is like the administration in Meerut, Agra, or the East. It is included in the Punjab area. There is neither law nor order. Each officer does as he pleases and thinks right." And in another : "Let me tell you something. Hafiz Mammo has been found innocent and released. He appeals to the authorities for the restoration of his property. His title to the property is established. Only formal orders remain to be passed. He appeared before the officer the day before yesterday. The file was put on the table. The officer inquired: "Who is Hafiz Mohammed Baksh ?" He replied : "'Tis I." The officer asked again: "Who is Hafiz Mamoo ?" He submitted : "That is me. My real name is Mohd Hafiz Baksh but I am generally known as Mamoo." Thundered the officer: "Nonsense ! you are Hafiz Mohammed Baksh and you are also Hafiz Mamoo. You are the whole world. And whatever is there in the world that is also you. To whom shall we return the house ?" The case was filed,

and Mian Mamoo returned to his place in disappointment."

It was Ghalib's sincere hope that his pension and honours would be restored before long. Early in 1858 he sent to the British officials Qasidas in praise of Queen Victoria and other high dignitaries. But these were returned by the Commissioner of Delhi on March 17, with the comment that they contained nothing but praise and flattery. The publication of his book 'Dastanbo' late in October, however, lifted the cloud over him to some extent. He had sent two beautifully bound copies of the book to London and four to top officials in India. The book drew high praise from the Director of Education of the United Provinces and the Financial Commissioner, Mr. Mcleod, himself sent for a copy through the Commissioner of Delhi. Early in 1859 he was paid Rs. 100 by way of help, pending decision on the restoration of his pension. The decision taken by the authorities was to pay a lump sum equivalent to the annual pension or remuneration to those entitled to that before the disposal of their cases. When Ghalib objected to his being paid Rs. 100 only and not Rs. 750, his rightful due in the light of the official decision, he was told that his was a special case. Others may have to wait for years but he would get the entire balance due to him in a short time. That kindled a ray of hope in his heart. But it soon got extinguished. He was not invited to the Governor-General's Durbar held in Meerut and when a few days later the Governor-General's camp shifted to Delhi and the poet sent his card to the Chief Secretary in his camp he got the rebuff: "You were friendly with the rebels

during the days of the Mutiny. Why do you want to establish contact with the Government now ?" That dashed even whatever little hope he may have entertained in his heart about the early restoration of his pension and honours and made him undertake an early trip to Rampur.

The allegation against Ghalib was that he had composed a Sikka—a piece about the Royal coin—on the proclamation of Bahadur Shah as Emperor by the rebels on July 18, 1857. The informant was one Gori Shankar, a spy in the pay of the British. Ghalib vehemently denied the allegation. When questioned about it by the Commissioner of Delhi, he replied: "This man writes wrong. The King was a poet himself, his sons were poets, and men in his service were poets too. God alone knows who recited this piece and the newsman wrote my name. Had I done that you would have found a piece in my hand in the office papers." His denial appears to be correct, although there is truth in the report published in an Agra newspaper—Aftab Alamtab—that Mirza Nosha (Ghalib) and Mukkaram Ali Khan read Qasidas in praise of the King on July 14, 1857.

His visit to Rampur now was in response to a long-standing invitation from the Nawab who had accepted him as his ustad—teacher—a little while before the Sepoy revolt. He had first invited Ghalib to Rampur soon after the conquest of Delhi by the British and wrote to him about it again on November 25, 1858, to which Ghalib replied : "As to your commands for my presence in Rampur, where shall I go if I do not come there ? Time has come near for the payment of my pension. How can

I go anywhere putting that off. It is said and I have reason to believe that the matter will be decided early in 1859 and those who are to get the money will get that and those who are to be refused payment will hear about it." The invitation was renewed by the Nawab on February 2, and again on April 13, 1859 to the latter of which Ghalib replied : "In my last letter I had written that the list of pensioners was ready, but it had not been despatched to the Centre. Nawab Governor-General, Lord Canning Bahadur, has, from Calcutta, sent for my papers. These have been separated from the main list and have been sent to the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab. From there they will go to Calcutta. Then the sanction would reach here through the Punjab officials and I would get the payment. I get the payment today and I write to you the next to arrange for my conveyance. And the moment I get the conveyance I leave for Rampur."

Still the months wore on and no word came from the officials. Ghalib became so hard up that he felt constrained to request the Nawab to fix a regular monthly remuneration for him. The request was readily granted and on July 16, 1859 he received a letter from the Nawab intimating that he would in future receive a monthly salary of Rs. 100. This he did right up to the end of his life on February 15, 1869. His wife, Umrao Begum, had been granted a monthly allowance of Rs. 50, by Nawab Ziauddin soon after the conquest of Delhi. But this and other amounts received from friends were hardly sufficient to meet the poet's needs and for a while he entertained an idea of shifting to Patiala. This he gave up on

further consideration sensing perhaps an indirect slight to the Nawab of Rampur, his pupil and benefactor, in such a move. The fixation of a regular monthly remuneration gave him a sense of security and relief.

Ghalib left Delhi for Rampur on January 19, 1860 and reached the place on January 27. He took two sons of Arif—Bakar Ali Khan and Hossain Ali Khan—along with him. The Nawab received him with great respect and honour. He was lodged at the Royal Palace, but shifted to a spacious house in Mohallah Rajdwara four days later at his own request prompted by the fear of children breaking the ornamental pieces in the Palace. At first he was served food from the royal kitchen but later Rs. 100 was fixed as his monthly allowance for board. That is to say he would receive Rs. 200 a month while at Rampur and Rs. 100 while in Delhi. The climate of the place was to his liking and he planned to pass the summer and rainy season there. But then the children upset the plan. They insisted on returning to Delhi without delay. Ghalib hesitated to send them alone 'lest some accident befall them and make him the object of criticism and ridicule the rest of his life.' He decided to return to Delhi himself along with them, took leave of the Nawab on March 17 and was back in the Moghul Capital on March 24.

His visit to Rampur strengthened his connections with the Court there. It perhaps also helped him in clearing up the misunderstanding with the British officials. While returning to Delhi Ghalib stopped in a Serai at Moradabad but Sir Syed Ahmed Khan soon took him to

his house. Sir Syed, on learning of the poet's difficulties, promised to do all that he possibly could to remove them. According to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sir Syed was responsible for the restoration of Ghalib's pension, despite the Delhi official's opposition. The Nawab of Rampur also seems to have done a little bit as he clearly refers to his talks with the high British dignitaries about Ghalib in one of his letters, and assures the poet that he would 'surely re-establish his old connections with the Government, as the Government recognizes and appreciates the worthy.' By May 1860 he got the full amount of pension due to him. Rs. 2,150 were paid to him on May 4, 1860. Of these he distributed Rs. 150 among the minor officials, and the rest he utilized for clearing his urgent debts. He owed Rs. 2,500 to various people. Only Rs. 87 were left with him in the end, with Rs. 500 still to be paid to his creditors. While the pension was restored the mode of its future payment—twice a year—added to his head-aches. Fortunately that order came into force only in December 1860, but then the Government decided to impose a four percent tax thus leaving him with only Rs. 60 per month. This drove him to meet his requirements by raising loans every month and clearing them with interest at the end of six months. After the restoration of his pension he tried for the restoration of his honours—the right to be invited to the Durbar and invested with the cloak of honour. His efforts bore fruit on March 3, 1863, when orders for the restoration of his honours were passed. About this he writes to Khan Bahadur Munshi Ghulam Ghaus in the following terms :

"On March 2, the Governor held his camp in the city.

On the last day I went to see my old benefactor Janab Maulvi Izhar Hussain Khan Bahadur. In the course of our conversation he said: "Your robe of honour and position in the Durbar continue." Surprised, I asked "How is that, Sir ?" He replied: "The present officer (Governor), on return from the United Kingdom, has seen all the papers in English and Persian of your area and has dictated an order in Couucil to the effect that Asad Ullah Khan's right of invitation to the Durbar, his position there, and his right of being awarded robe of honour will be restored and continue as before."

Accordingly Ghalib was sent for by the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, Sir Robert Montgomery, and awarded the robe of honour on March 23, 1863.

The deathly silence which enveloped the city for months after the reconquest of Delhi by the British was responsible for another book by Ghalib—'Katah-i-Barhan'—the publication of which in October 1861, created a furore in the literary circles. The book was written in early 1859. It began as a study, a rather critical study of the renowned dictionary of the Persian language "Barhan Katah". The study was undertaken by Ghalib primarily to kill time, as the absence of social and literary activities in the city forced him to continue in imprisonment at home and he had nothing but this dictionary and another book, "Dasatir", at home to read. 'The poet noticed certain errors on the part of the famous lexiographer in the interpretation of certain words and expressions. He found the metaphorical and literal meanings of certain expressions confused and intermingled,

This made him sharpen his scrutiny and record his objections and comments. These grew in number and volume as time passed and he methodically pondered over the work and examined it. The poet at first recorded his objections and comments on the margin of the book—this is preserved in the library of Nawab Sahib of Loharu even now—and later transferred these to paper. In course of time it grew into a 97-page book. It was published by the Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow in 1861 and priced at Rupee 1. Fifty copies of the book were purchased by Ghalib himself and distributed among his friends. A revised and enlarged edition was re-published by Akmal-ul-Mataba, Delhi, in December 1865, under the title 'Darfash-i-Kaviani'. While it is difficult to get a copy of 'Katah-i-Barhan', 'Darfash-i-Kaviani' is available in the library of the British Museum.

The publication of this book set off a bitter controversy between Ghalib and the supporters of 'Katah-i-Barhan' which lasted nearly seven years. According to Ghalib "it caused an earthquake in the Persian literary circles in India, and the supporters of 'Barhan Katah' buckled up their arms and came into the open with unsheathed swords and daggers." Between 1861 and 1867 nearly a dozen books were published in Persian and Urdu in support of Ghalib and against him. Works published by Ghalib's critics comprise over 1150 pages and are mostly in Persian while those published in support of Ghalib on the issue run into less than 150 pages. The first book to be published in criticism of Ghalib was the 96-page "Mohraq Katah Barhan" (Persian) by Syed Saadat Ali in 1864 and the last "Shamsher-i-Teztar" a

122-page volume in Persian by Maulvi Ahmed Ali, author of the 468-page book "Muved-i-Barhan" (Persian)published in 1866 from Calcutta in support of the lexiographer. Other books published against Ghalib were: "Satahi-Barhan" by Rahim Beg Meerutee (174 Pages in Persian) "Kata-ul-Katah"—a 268-page volume in Persian—by Maulvi Aminuddin and "Tegh-i-Teztar" a slim volume by Abdul Samad Fida. In defence of Ghalib were published the 28-page book in Persian "Dafai-Hazian" by Maulvi Najaf Ali; "Lataif-i-Ghalib" by Mian Dad Khan Siah (Ghalib appears to have been the real author of this 41-page volume in Urdu), an eight page "Swalat-i-Abdul Karim", in Urdu, a 16-page 'Nama-i-Ghalib' and a 34-page 'Tegh-i-Tez,' Ghalib being the author of the last two works in Urdu. 'Hangam-i-Dil Ashob' part II was the last work of the series to be published by two of Ghalib's pupils, Mohammed Baqar Ali Baqar and Khwaja Syed Fakhar-uddin Hussain Sukhan. It was partlyin Urdu and partly in Persian as it contained replies to various pieces in both the languages published in criticism of Ghalib.

The whole controversy was unfortunately on a very low level. None of the parties tried to maintain a high standard in rebutting the arguments of the other. Competence of each-other was freely questioned and unfortunate epithets and harsh words and expressions were unscrupulously indulged in. Ghalib further enraged the critics by declining to accept any Indian as an authority on Persian language. "Katah-ul-Katah" by M. Aminuddin was particularly in bad taste bordering on the obscene. It was the only book Ghalib did not reply to and when questioned about it by a friend he explained: "Should an

ass kick you, would you kick him back too ?" Later, however, he abandoned this rational attitude. On December 2, 1867, he instituted a criminal complaint in the Court of the District Magistrate, Delhi, on a charge of defamation against the author, praying for severe punishment to the guilty. Summons were issued to the accused. He drew up a list of eminent educationists and scholars of Persian as defence witnesses as against the prosecution witnesses who were younger in years and comparatively junior in position and authority. He also sought the aid of certain influential nobles of the city to have pressure put on Ghalib for a compromise. In deference to the wishes of these nobles, and also realising that there was little chance of his succeeding in the complaint, Ghalib agreed to a compromise. The offence was ultimately compounded by him on March 22, 1868. When asked by someone why these Maulvis with whom the poet was well-acquainted had appeared against him for the defence, Ghalib replied: "Birds of the same feather flock together. Men like to keep like company. I am a gentleman, how could these clever people come to me."

In July 1861 was published the third edition of Diwan-E-Ghalib according to the text sent by him in May 1857 to the Nawab of Rampur. Another edition was published in 1862 and still another—the fifth and the last to be published in his lifetime—in 1863. That very year Munshi Naval Kishore brought out an enlarged edition of his Persian poetical works under the title "Kulyiat-E-Nazam Farsi.' Efforts for the collection of his letters in Urdu began in 1858, with vehement opposition from Ghalib in the beginning. But the poet relented before long and

work on the project began in right earnestness around 1861, Munshi Mumtiaz Ali being the main moving spirit. The work, however, could not be completed for years and the letters under the title "Aud-i-Hindi" were published in 1868, a few months before the poet's death.

Ghalib's letters in Urdu mark a turning point in the history of Urdu letter-writing in particular, and Urdu prose in general. They secure for him a unique place of honour in the history of Urdu literature. They are incomparable in directness of approach and simplicity of style. They also exhibit a ready wit and scintillating humour. Language of the common man assumes a literary style in them, giving them a perennial freshness and enriching the Urdu literature. Their importance for students of Ghalib's life and times is unlimited. Few writers in Urdu language have been able to equal the master in this respect. Interesting light is shed on Ghalib's life and character by them. For instance in a letter to Mir Mehdi Majruh he writes about the rains of 1862:

"Now comes the mention of rains. Let me first tell you about the things in general. First there was a mutiny by the Blacks, then came a commotion by the White. Then followed the collapse of houses. Next came the calamity of epidemic and then the tragedy of famine. Now come the rains combining all these calamities. It is the twenty-first day. On occasions the sky becomes visible like a flash of lightning. If men discover stars in the sky they feel inclined to take them for glow-worms. Thiefs have the time of their lives during these dark nights. Hardly a day passes without one hearing of theft at two or

three places. Do not you think that I am exaggerating. Thousands of buildings have collapsed. Hundreds are buried underneath them. Each street has turned into a canal. In brief those were the times of famine, when there were no rains, no corn grew in the field. Now is the time of water—It has rained so heavily that all the crops sown have been washed away. Those who had not done the sowing could not do that. Have you learnt all about this place Delhi now ?" Two months later he wrote again: "Do not ask me about the rains. It is all a curse of the Heavens, wrath of the Almighty. Gali Qasim Jan is become the canal of Saadat Khan. The door of the house where I reside, facing Katra Alam Beg on the side of the Mosque, has come down. The steps of the house are about to crumble. The roof has turned into a sieve. If it rains for a quarter, it drips for an hour. My books and pens are all lying in the store-room. Here is a big pan on the floor and there a basin. Where shall I sit to write a letter to you ?"

And in the same strain he writes to Nawab Ala-ud-din. "Brother I am in great trouble. The walls of the female-quarter of my house have crumbled, and the lavatory collapsed. The roofs are leaking. Your Auntie says: "Oh God, I am buried, I am dying." The main portion of the house is even worse. I do not fear death. I have become nervous because of want of joy and pleasure. The top of the house is a big sieve. If it rains for two hours, it drips for four. Even if the landlord wishes to have repairs done to the house how can he do it ? All that can be done only if there is a break in the rains. And pending the repairs how can I take my seat here ?"

By now Ghalib was acknowledged as a 'King among poets' throughout India. There were also numerous admirers of his prose. Except for Hyderabad, he drew high praise from men of letters and their patrons all over the country. He had among his pupils, besides the Nawab of Rampur, members of the Royal family of Bengal, Prince Bashir-ud-din and Khan Bahadur Abdul Ghafoor, Nawab Mir Ghulam Baba Khan of Surat and sons of the Nawab of Loharu, Allauddin and Nawab Ziauddin, brother of the ruler. Maharaja of Alwar was also one of his great admirers, and so was Khan Bahadur Munshi Ghulam Ghaus Bekhabar a great scholar of Allahabad. His book "Dastanbo" had won immense popularity in the Punjab and there was also great demand for his letters in Urdu. The poet invariably drew to him eminent men and scholars on brief visits to the city.

Ill health. however, had him firmly in its grip by 1863. It rendered him unfit to attend to demands on him from friends and others for the revision of their verse. That year he wrote to the Nawab of Rampur seeking his indulgence in being exempted from the responsibility of revising his work and continuing his monthly allowance in consideration of the services rendered in the past. The Nawab graciously acceded to the request and his monthly allowance from Rampur continued right upto the time of his death, although Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan expired in April 1865, and Ghalib's relations with his successor, Nawab Qalab Ali Khan, became a little strained soon after his installation on the throne.

Ghalib was deeply aggrieved by the death of Nawab

Yusuf Ali Khan who was a great patron of art and literature. Unlike other rulers Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan never treated Ghalib as his employee. He always showed great regard for him and in his letters to the poet addressed him like a brother and a friend, encouraging him to do likewise. The Nawab further was ever generous towards him. Whatever and how numerous his demands, they were readily conceded. Great indeed is the poet's debt to Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan and the Court at Rampur. How greatly concerned the poet felt about the Nawab's illness—probably cancer—towards the end of 1864, is evident from his letter to the Nawab which said :

"Ever since I have learnt about your Highness' illness, Heaven alone knows how I, my wife, and my son Hossain Ali Khan have fared. No food was prepared at our place for the day. We observed a fast. Fortunately the news turned out to be untrue. That helped me regain myself. I would, however, feel completely at ease when I hear the happy tidings of your recovery and write a piece about it to you".

Later he wrote to the Nawab that his study of astrology showed that he would live for years free from illness after his recovery from the present ailment. The Nawab, however, died within a month of the receipt of this letter from Ghalib. A sad commentary indeed on his grasp of the subject !

Chapter IX

The Last Years

ILLNESS, frustration, and disappointments overwhelmed Ghalib during the last years of his life. None of these, however, succeeded against the hard rock of his stoicism. Indeed upto the very last of his breath the poet retained his freshness of mind and the capacity to have a laugh at himself, being a spectator of his own plight.

An attempt to secure the position of the Queen's Court-poet ; strained relations with the new Nawab of Rampur, Nawab Qalab Ali Khan ; and his active participation, after initial reluctance, in arranging publication of his letters in Urdu, are the major events of Ghalib's life towards its end. The unfortunate controversy sparked off by the publication of his "Kata-i-Barhan," dealt with in the preceding chapter, was an additional source of distress involving sheer waste of time, talent and money.

After the restoration of his pension, and the right to be invited to the Durbar and be vested with the robe of honour, Ghalib, in early 1865, made a representation to the Government for being appointed a poet-laureate of the Queen and being given a higher position in the Durbar. He also requested the Government to arrange for the publication of his book 'Dastanbo' at State expense. The representation at first drew favourable attention of the authorities. The Chief Secretary of the Punjab Government considered as 'reasonable the view of the Commissioner of Delhi that there was no harm in appointing

Ghalib as the Governor-General's Court-poet, although it was not proper to name him as the Queen's Court-poet.' There was no need for the office carrying any salary. The robe of honour should, however, be presented to the poet annually and it could also be given to him on other special occasions during the year if he recited any Qasidas. This would satisfy Ghalib and also provide encouragement for arts in the East which were at the moment in a state of neglect. The Chief Secretary's report called for further inquiries on the part of the higher authorities into Ghalib's conduct during the days of the Sepoy revolt. A copy of his book, 'Dastanbo', was also sent for by the Government for examination. The poet indeed arranged for a new edition of the book to be published as he was not satisfied with the previous one on account of its various caligraphic errors. His efforts on both the counts in the end came to naught. His attendance at the Court of the last Moghul and reciting a piece earlier mentioned, stood in the way of his first request being conceded. Purity of the Persian language in his book 'Dastanbo'—'it being uncommon and unintelligible for the masses', as the official commentator put it—brought about the rejection of his second request.

The poet's inherent contempt for the Indian lexiographers of Persian was responsible for striking a discordant note in his relations with the new Nawab of Rampur, Nawab Qalab Ali Khan. It began all on a quiet note but soon took an unpleasant turn. The Nawab had sent a piece of his in prose for the poet's scrutiny and review. Ghalib objected to the use of certain words on the ground that they did not connote what they were intended to,

and accordingly changed them as he thought proper. The Nawab in all innocence cited, 'Farhang-i-Rashidi', 'Farhang-i-Jahangiri' and certain other dictionaries of Persian language in his support. This provoked Ghalib. He wrote back contemptuously about these lexiographers saying that they were not Iranians but Indians and some of them were even Hindus. He would not, however, enter into a controversy 'as he did not know the ways of controversy and would accept the interpretation of the Nawab, not on the authority of these lexiographers, but because he accepted the Nawab as his Master.'

The Nawab felt offended by the letter. He read in between the lines a dig at himself. He wrote to the poet expressing 'surprise' at his 'strange letter' and venting his displeasure at certain expressions used therein. He requested him to refrain from indulging in superfluities in future, unless he wanted an end to be put to all correspondence with him, in which case he should just throw a hint. The sharp rebuke in the letter had a telling effect on Ghalib. He tendered immediate and profound apologies to the Nawab and assured him that he had not meant disrespect to anyone but had only intended to convey that he relied on his own research and study in the matter and was not concerned with others. The Nawab accepted the apology but the affair seems to have left an element of rancour in his mind. He never again sent any of his pieces for scrutiny and review by Ghalib. Fundamental differences in their life and outlook—the Nawab being a Sunni and a pious Muslim and Ghalib a Shia and a 'half Muslim', to use his own expression,—were, perhaps, additional causes of estrangement between the

two. It may, however, be said to the credit of Nawab Qalab Ali Khan that he did not allow his personal views in the matter to put an end to Ghalib's connections with the Court. The poet continued to receive upto the very end of his life, the monthly allowance of Rs. 100, fixed by Nawab Yusuf Ali Khan, although he did practically no work to justify its continuance by the new Nawab. Hardly a few lines were composed by Ghalib during his last years.

Indeed he stopped composing verse in Persian in 1865, when he wrote his last Ghazal at the instance of Nawab Aminuddin of Loharu. His last Ghazal in Urdu was written in 1866 at the instance of the Nawab's son, Mirza Alauddin.

The idea for the publication of Ghalib's letters first struck his friend Rai Bahadur Munshi Shiv Narain Akbarabadi around 1858. But his approaches to Ghalib in this connection were repulsed by the poet who purposely discouraged the idea saying : "there is hardly a letter that I have penned with care and purpose. The language used is just casual. Their publication would go against my fame and reputation. Moreover, why should personal matters be displayed before others ?" The matter was, thereupon, dropped by Munshi Shiv Narain.

But the same idea crossed the mind of another friend three years later. It was Chaudhary Abdul Ghafoor Sarwar of Marhara. He felt that the poet's letters breathed "a unique freshness of mind and beauty of style that rendered it unjust for the addressee to keep them from the public view." Soon afterwards he chanced to read

out some of the letters addressed to him at a meeting attended among others by Munshi Mumtaz Ali Khan, a noble of Meerut and proprietor of the Mujtabai Press. So profoundly impressed was the gathering that Munshi Mumtaz Ali Khan offered to arrange for their publication. Chaudhary Sarwar, thereupon, collected the letters under the title 'Mehar-i-Ghalib' and handed them over to the Press. But then the publisher thought that it would be better to include in the collection letters written by Ghalib to other friends also as that would greatly enhance the value and saleability of the publication. On learning that Khwaja Ghulam Ghaus Bekhabar was also engaged in the collection of such letters, he made an immediate approach to him and secured these letters for inclusion in the volume under publication. By now Ghalib's initial antipathy towards the project had mellowed to the extent that he even assisted the editors in the collection of his letters by asking his friends to pass these over to them. Some inexplicable reason, however, delayed their publication by several years. The delay caused Ghalib to suspect, in 1863, that Munshi Mumtaz Ali had, in all probability, dropped the idea. Meanwhile another friend, Munshi Jawahar Singh Jauhar, approached Ghalib for assistance in the project. Ghalib then wrote to Khwaja Bekhabar in 1863 :

"What is this Munshi Mumtaz Ali Khan doing. He collected the letters but did not publish them. At the moment they are in great demand in the Punjab region. I know you would not find him anywhere to convey this. But surely it lies within your prowess to send me all the letters that have reached you or at least their

copies by parcel-post. I wish that parcel be the reply to this letter."

He also wrote to Mirza Alauddin Ahmed Khan around May 1863 : "My object in writing this note is to convey to you that some friends in Matba Akmal Almataba are interested in publishing my letters in Urdu. They want the letters from me. They have also collected some of these from various quarters. I do not keep copies of my letters. I am sure you would have many of my letters. Kindly send these by parcel-post to me or send them per some bearer who happens to come this way in a day or so. That would bring me immense joy and happiness."

Munshi Mumtaz Ali's collection was published under the title 'Aud-i-Hindi', on October 27, 1868. The poet, however, was greatly dissatisfied with the book. There were too many mistakes in the letters. Nor did their arrangement come upto his satisfaction. That prompted Ghalib to press for an early publication of the collection by Munshi Jawahar Singh Jauhar, Mir Fakhar-uddin and Munshi Bihari Lal Mushtak. The book was in its finishing stages when the poet died. It was finally published on March 6, 1869, three weeks after Ghalib's death. The book was titled "Urdu-i-Mualla" and carried a foreword by Mir Mehdi Majruh and an epilogue by Mirza Qurban Ali Beg Salik. According to Mir Mehdi Majruh the book was divided into two parts. The first contained letters written in simple language and style, for the benefit of students, while the second comprised comparatively difficult pieces and notes, for the study and pleasure of the men of letters. The 464-page

'Urdu-i-Mulla' as published in 1869, however, comprised only the first part of the collection. Even the second edition in 1891, issued by the same Press did not include letters in the second part. It was only in 1898 that Maulvi Abdul Ahad of Matba Mujtabai, Delhi, agreed at the instance of Maulana Hali to arrange for the publication of the two parts, with 56 additional pages to the first edition. Some 25 letters by Ghalib were added to the volume published by Sheikh Mubarak Ali from Lahore in 1829. Another collection of Ghalib's letters to the Nawab of Rampur written during the last 12 years of his life came out in 1937 under the title 'Makatib-i-Ghalib,' edited by Maulvi Imtiaz Ali Arshi. These letters, an important source material for writers on Ghalib, establish a permanent place of honour for Ghalib in the field of Urdu literature. Many an eminent writer in Urdu has tried to imitate his style and display similar mastery of the language but without satisfactory results. The letters even upto this date are read with interest and admiration by students of Indian literature in general and Urdu prose in particular. "Inimitable and unique indeed" are the compliments they evoke from the critics. And there are no less than 546 of them, 280 undated, addressed to some 56 persons, Munshi Har Gopal Tafta receiving the largest number 123—49 of them being undated.

The letters vividly portray Ghalib's life and character. About himself he writes in one : 'Normally the sinners of this world get their punishment in the world of spirits. But it happens sometimes that sinners of the world of spirits are sent to this world to undergo the suffering

they merit. So I was ordered to be produced in this world on 8th of Rajab 1212, Hijria. For thirteen years I was kept in police lock-up. On the 7th of Rajab 1225, Hijria, I was sentenced to imprisonment for life (The reference is to his marriage). I was put in chains and cast into prison, which was Delhi. Writing of prose and composition of verse were ordered to be my hard labour. After years of stay in the jail I fled the place and for three years roamed about in regions of the East. At last I was brought back from Calcutta and imprisoned in the same place. When they found me to be a dangerous prisoner, they added two handcuffs to my chains, (reference here is to Hossain Ali Khan and Bakar Ali Khan, children of Arif, who were brought up by Ghalib after the death of their father as his own). With feet injured by the fetters and hands by the manacles, it became even more difficult to do the hard labour assigned to me. Last year, shaking off the fetters, I ran away with my handcuffs and reached Rampur passing through Meerut and Moradabad. For about six months I stayed there. I was caught again. Now I resolved never again to attempt another escape. And even if I wish to, how can I do that? Now I do not even have the strength to flee. Let us see when I receive the orders for my release. There is a small chance of my being let off this month. Nobody goes anywhere except to his place after release. I would also, after my liberation, return straight to Heaven—the world of spirits."

Another of his letters reflects his attitude towards women. On learning of the death of a friend's beloved, he wrote to him: 'I have just received your letter full

of grief. I had it read out to me by Yusuf Ali Khan and learnt about your relations—your love for her and her loyalty to you. Let me tell you something. Firdausi, Hassan Basri, and Majnu are the pioneers and masters among the poets Fakirs and lovers. A poet reaches the height of his fame by becoming Firdausi and a fakir by equalling Hassan Basri. A lover comes into his own and full view by emulating Majnu. Laila died befote Majnu and your love died before you. You are even luckier in that: Laila died at her place while your love died at yours. My dear, there is nothing telling about the Moghuls. Whoever they die for, dies for them. In my life also I had one under my spell. May God bless them both and bless us two, for I have known the griefs of a love's death. The incident I refer to, is forty years old. Although it is an age since I left that field and became a total stranger in the sphere, I will not forget her death for the whole of my life. Even now I remember her coquettish ways. I know how you would be feeling the shock. But have patience and bid good-bye to the tempestuous ways of love.' Shortly after he addressed another letter to Mehar rebuking him for being still in a state of mourning. The letter in part says :

"Mirza Sahib, I do not like this. I am sixty five years of age and fifty of these have been spent in viewing and enjoying the world of colour and perfume. In my younger days a Master advised me not to accept the ways of saints and not to refrain from indulgence in the pleasures of life. Eat, drink, and be merry. Enjoy life to the full. Do not become like a bee but act as a fly. I have always followed that advice. Only he should mourn for others

who would not die himself. Why weep, why cry? Do not take grief to the heart. Thank God for your newly-gained freedom. And if you find happiness only in enslavement then you may have some Munna Jan if there be no Chunna Jan—(Mehar's beloved). Indeed I shudder at the very thought of Heaven. That I would have perennial life, a place and a *Houri* to pass the whole of it! That makes my gorge rise. And why should not it? The very idea of a single ever-living *Houri* is revolting. Brother, come to your senses and take some new affection to your heart. Give it to some-one else."

Pestered by his creditors, and humiliated by them in various ways, Ghalib wrote to Mirza Qurban Ali Beg Salik: "I have no hopes of God even, not to speak of men. I cannot help it. I have become a spectator of my own plight and humiliation. I find happiness in sorrow and degradation. I imagine myself to be a stranger. Each new grief makes me say: Ha! There Ghalib gets another kick. He was verp proud of him-self and claimed to be a great poet and scholar of Persian language, with none to equal him far and wide. Come, face the creditors now. Hullo! Najam-ul-Daula Bahadur, Hullo Nawab Sahib, why Nawab Sahib but Ghulam Sahib, What is all this? Here a creditor holds you by the collar, there another hurls words of abuse on you. You are a Saljoqi and Afrasiabi. Why do you stand all this humiliation. Why do not you say something? Why do not you hit back? Speak up; say something. But what can he say? How can he, in such dishonour, speak. He has wine on loan from the store, roses from the flower-vendor,

fruit from the shopkeeper, cloth from the merchant and money from the goldsmith. How would you ever be able to clear all that debt, you should have given some thought to that also."

His sense of humour bursts forth at various points even while dealing with religious matters. Here is a letter written to a friend during the holy month of Ramzan—the month of fasting and prayer for the devout Muslim. "The sun is very fierce. I am observing fast these days, but I keep on fondling it. Now I have a sip of water. Now I take a puff at the hubble-bubble—(Hooka). Sometimes I take a piece of bread also. People living here are men of strange ideas and notions. They are most un-understanding. I fondle my fast, but these people say that I do not observe one. They do not understand that it is one thing not to observe a fast and quite another to fondle it."

Skin diseases, gastric troubles, constipation, diabetes and pain in intestines were the main afflictions of Ghalib during his last years. They greatly undermined his energy and strength. Towards the end of 1861 he developed abscesses at various points. They took on a serious form, confining him to bed for nearly two years and making him experience the very Hell in life. Of his condition during this period he writes in detail to his friends. Here are some extracts :

'It is six months that a pimple appeared on my right hand. The pimple developed into a boil which burst in time to become a wound. The wound turned into a cave,

I was under treatment of Indian 'Jarrahs'—(crude form of surgeons). My condition worsened. For the last two months I have been under treatment of Dr. Kale. Needles are being run through my body. My flesh is being chopped off. I have been feeling some relief for the past twenty days." But the relief was only temporary for another letter dated August 16, 1863, says : "For the last one year I am affected with diseases of the blood. My body, because of the excess of boils, has turned into a wick of the candle. All strength has left me. I remain in bed throughout the day and night."

To a few other friends he writes : "No, I have neither fever, nor cough nor paralysis of the body or jaw. It is worse and more revolting in appearance. I am suffering from a disease of the skin. In brief, I have twelve boils on my body from head to foot. Each boil has a wound which in fact is a cave. Every day I need half a pound of ointment and twelve or thirteen pieces of cloth for dressing. For nine or ten months I went without sleep and food. I was in great distress day and night. I would sleep for a while when I would be awakened by excruciating pain caused by some abscess. I would welter in agony and pain. It would subside and let me doze off. But I would soon be awakened again the same way. This is how I have passed these nights......I am fed up with this life. In fact life within me struggles like an encaged bird to free itself. I do not like anything. Neither any hobby, nor any meeting. I hate books. I hate verse, I hate my body and I hate my soul. By Heavens, all that I write is true and without the slightest exaggeration. I taste of death every day. It

keeps away from me as God wills me to be in constant agony".

He recovered from his ailment by the end of 1863. In November that year he wrote to Qazi Abdul Jamil: "I have recovered now. There is no boil or pimple anywhere. But there is so much of weakness that may God have mercy on me. And why should not there be such weakness. For years I have been confined to bed. I am seventy years of age, and half of the blood in my body has without doubt left it in the form of pus. And where now the age that would make up for that? Anyway I am still alive and am grateful to you for inquiring about my health." Three months later in February 1864, when a rumour spread about his death and Nawab Anwar-ul-Daula wrote to him about it, he replied: "May God give his blessing to you. You never cared to enquire about me till you heard of my death! Both the rumours about my death, and my present lines about my life, are partly true and partly false. Among the dead I am only half-dead, and among the living I am only half-alive."

In October 1862, Ghalib undertook a second trip to Rampur. Formal celebration of the ascendence to the Gaddi of Nawab Qalab Ali Khan was the occasion necessitating this journey by the State's Court-poet. Ghalib went in high hopes. He was in great need at the time, having incurred heavy debts and being constantly pestered by his creditors. He was received with all the honour, warmth and affection extended to him by the new Nawab's predecessor. But the generosity of the former was lacking. Nawab Qalab Ali Khan could

not, in all fairness, be blamed for that. Ghalib's relations with his predecessor were more on a personal than official level. Ghalib, however, had come with different notions as is evident from his letter to Tafta from Rampur which says: "I have not come here to ask for reward for my verse or appreciation of my prose. I have come here to ask for alms. Even my meals I do not have from my personal account. I get them from the State. Let me see what the fate has in store for me at the time of my departure."

But the fate had willed a sum far below Ghalib's expectations. The poet was awarded only Rs. 1,000 and an additional sum of Rs. 200 was paid towards his expenses on the journey. This sorely disappointed him and he left Rampur on December 20, in great dejection.

Trouble lay in wait for him on the way. The river Ram Ganga near Moradabad was in spate due to heavy winter rains. There was only a provisional bridge of boats to cross the river. Ghalib's planquin had hardly crossed the bridge when it was washed away, with all his luggage and servants left on the other bank. He was constrained to pass the night in a Serai in the town without any bedding or food. His frail health at the age, nearing seventy, could not stand the strain and broke down. Fortunately the following day some friends came and took him to the house of Sayed-ud-din Khan Sahib, where he was extended the traditional hospitality of the house, love and honour, beyond his expectation. Mohammed Hossain Khan, a top official of the District, took him from Sayed-ud-din Khan's house to his place and

played host to him for full five days. He finally reached Delhi on the 8th January 1866. Writing about this trip to a friend he says : "My strength and glory, beauty of thought and refinement of nature, all these goods were lost during my journey to and from Rampur". And besides that he soon started that controversy about the authority and authenticity of Indian lexiographers of Persian language which almost wrecked his relations with the Court of Rampur.

In a letter to the Nawab of Rampur written on January 10, 1866, the poet describes his experience thus : "I reached Moradabad. The bridge gave way after the planquin had passed and all my luggage and men were left on the other side in the open with nothing but cold to feed upon. Well, they alone know best how they fared. I passed the night, hungry and thirsty, in a small room in the Serai at Moradabad, wrapped in a single blanket and reciting one of my own pieces.

"I got up in the morning in pain and distress. Then came two angels sent by Sahibzada Mumtaz Ali Khan and they took me to the residence of Sayed-ud-din Khan Sahib, who received me with such respect and honour as was beyond my expectations. Then all of a sudden, Maulvi Mohammed Hassan Khan Bahadur, Saddar-ul-Sadar, reached there and took me to his place where he kept me for five days. Brother Mustafa Khan Bahudur met me there. The next day he left for the capital of pleasure—Rampur—and I for the centre of woe, Delhi, reaching my grief-stricken house on January 8, 1866. It was all because of your glory, else I and to reach Delhi alive !"

Ghalib was confined to bed with diabetes and pain in intestines soon after his return from Rampur. The unfortunate incident on the return journey greatly undermined his health. The confinement, this time, appeared to him to be for good which could end only with his death. Indeed he yearned for that and forecast the date of 'the great liberation' several times, each time to be falsified by nature. Five months after his return from Rampur he writes to Maulvi Habib Ullah Khan Zaka on May 12, 1866: "My friend, my love, do you have any idea how I am? I was weak before, now I am half-dead. I was only deaf before, and now I am approaching blindness. These are the after-effects of the trip to Rampur. There is extreme weakness of the body and also of the eye. I write a few lines, my fingers become benumbed and the words incapable of recognition. I have lived seventy years. I have lived enough. Now this life is a matter not of years, but only of months and days."

To the same friend he writes on December 4, 1866: "As for my diet, I take seven crushed almonds with syrup in the morning and thick gravy of about a seer of mutton in the afternoon. In the evening I sometimes take three fried kababs. Late in the evening I have wine weighing five Rupees with essence of sugar. As for weakness of my limbs, I cannot get up from bed. If I try to get up with my hands set on the floor, like an animal, I experience quaking and bursting of the muscles. I feel like making water about a dozen times during the day and ten or twelve times at night. The pot remains near the bed. I get up, make water, and go to bed again. Among the reasons I live is the fact that I have

no trouble with sleep. After attending to the calls of nature, I easily doze off. I have an income of Rupees one hundred and sixty, and expense of Rupees three hundred —a deficit of Rupees one hundred and forty a month. Tell me is not it really difficult to live ?"

Notwithstanding his frail health Ghalib had during his last years to attend to a number of letters from friends and others seeking his advice and guidance in respect of composition of verse. Many a piece was sent to him for correction and improvement. Now he felt the task beyond his powers. Consequently; early in 1867, he had a note published in two Delhi newspapers—Akmal-Al-Akhbar and Ashraf-Al-Akhbar to the effect that so far he had never hesitated to answer letters from friends and correct their pieces. He had tried to serve them as best as he could. But now his health was such as could not stand this strain. He, therefore, requested to be excused in this regard in future. Few, however, seem to have paid any heed to his request. Letters continued to pour in and he continued to dictate replies thereto upto a day before his death.

A vivid portrait of Ghalib in his last years is left to us by Khwaja Aziz Lucknawi who met the poet on his way to Kashmir. Writes he : "Mirza Sahib's was a pucca house with a big gate. On one side there was a room and in the room there was a cot on which lay a weak-limbed, wheatish-coloured, about eighty-year old man, his eyes glued to a bound book held on his chest. This was Mirza Ghalib Dehlvi who in all probability was studying Diwan-E-Kaani.

"I offered him my respects but he was so hard of hearing that not a word got on to him. I stood for a while then decided to return. Just then Ghalib turned over the side, holding the arm of the bed, and his eyes fell on me. I bowed to him. With great difficulty he succeeded in getting up from the bed and getting down to the floor. He made me sit beside himself and placed a pen and paper before me saying : 'I can see this much, but my ears cannot hear a thing. Please write down the replies to whatever I ask.'

"He asked me my name and the place I came from. The gentleman who had accompanied me to him tried his best to introduce me to him in a loud voice, but all in vain. When I scribbled down my name and the place of residence he said, 'If you have come to see me then you should also be composing something. Pray, recite some of your pieces also.' I said that I had come to hear his work. He recited his several pieces for a long time then insisted on my reciting some of my own. I recited a couplet which he repeated after me and commended it a great deal. Then he turned to the servant ordering him to bring food.

"Thinking that he was trying to extend the traditional hospitality of the house to us, I scribbled down a note to him to the effect that our luggage lay packed up, and our carriage stood outside in the Serai and there was but little time left for us to catch the train. We had just come *en route* to pay our respects and now would beg leave to depart. He said : 'The object of your visit was to see me and my condition. You have seen

my weakness, it is so difficult for me to move about. As for my sight, I do not recognize anyone and you have also seen howsoever much one may shout I do not hear a word. You have heard me recite my verse. The only thing that remains to be seen is what I eat. Just have a look at that, too, before you go.'

"Then came his food. There were two *phulkas* (thin chappatis) and a plate of roasted meat with some fruit. He took only two or three morsels and then beckoned to the servant to clear the place. It is really a marvel how he survives on such a small quantity of food."

His ill-health meant no relief from domestic worries either. There was the question of Mirza Hossain Ali Khan's marriage whose engagement had already taken place and whose relations now pressed for an early ceremony. But more troublesome and pressing was the question of his debts. As his health failed his creditors became more restless and menacing. Some of them even threatened legal action against him. Ghalib had the means neither to arrange for Hossain Ali Khan's marraige nor to clear his debts. His only hope of succour lay in the Court at Rampur.

He at first approached Nawab Qalab Ali Khan for monetary assistance to meet the expenses of the marriage. Letters from the Court officials inquiring about the total sum needed raised high hopes with him. He put the figure at two to two and a half thousand of rupees but said that he did not deserve that much and would try to cut down the expenses to whatever was given by the

Court. Pestered by his creditors he, however, soon abandoned the plans for Hossain Ali Khan's marriage and turned to the Nawab for assistance to clear his debts. He wrote to the Nawab on November 16, 1868 : "I have been able to save only Rs. 54 out of this month's salary. I can save my honour only if I get Rs. 800. I have abandoned the plans for Hossain Ali Khan's marriage. I will never talk about it now. Why bother about marriage. It will be a great thing if I can save my face and honour. Kindly send me Rupees 800." Nawab Mirza Khan Dagh, who was employed at the Court of Rampur, informed the poet that the Nawab had agreed to make an award to him to help clear his debts and wanted to know the exact figure. Ghalib again intimated the amount but no orders were passed by the Nawab. Fortunately, none of the creditors translated his threat into action. The poet, however, had a constant drea d of that.

As death approached nearer, his strength declined further. But his wit and sense of humour remained almost totally unaffected. So did his consideration and regard for friends. Although about a year or so before his death, he had stopped moving out of his house and was indeed too weak to attend to letters, he never ceased to inquire about his friends and reply to their letters. At first he would write the letters in his own hand lying in bed, but when the hands began to quake at the slightest effort with the advancement of age and weakness, he started dictating replies to them.

A few days before his death he developed intermittent

fainting fits. He would remain in a state of coma for hours, but would exhibit his usual cheerfulness of the spirit the moment he regained consciousness. Maulana Hali tells us of his visit to the poet a day before his death. Ghalib had just come to, when the Maulana reached there. A letter from Nawab Allauddin of Loharu inquiring about his death was shown to him. To this he dictated a reply which read in part. "Why do you ask about me from myself ? You should ask about me from my neighbours in a day or so." After some time he again relapsed into a state of coma.

When he came to again, he expressed a desire to eat something. Then he turned to the servant and asked him to fetch Mirza Jiwan Beg (eldest daughter of Bakar Ali Khan Kamal whose real name was Mohd. Sultan Begum but whom Ghalib always treated like a boy and lovingly addressed as Mirza JiwanBeg). Kullu went to the house to find her asleep. Her mother sent word that she would send her the moment she awoke. Ghalib said : "Very well, I will eat when she comes" and reclined his head against the pillow. The moment he did so he passed out again. Hakim Mahmud Khan and Hakim Ahsan Ullah Khan Bahadur were immediately sent for. Their diagnosis was that it was a case of cerebral haemorrhage and consequent paralysis of the brain. They tried their best to revive him but all in vain. He never came to again and passed away the next day, on February 15, 1869 in the afternoon.

A controversial figure throughout his life, Ghalib continued to be so even after his death. Many who

knew him to be a Shia wanted to perform his last rites according to the customs of the sect. But Nawab Ziauddin Ahmed Khan Neer Rakhshan, and Hakim Mahmud Khan would not agree. And none could dare challenge their will, so influential and powerful indeed were they in the Capital. The funeral prayer was offered outside Delhi gate and the poet was given a burial in the dynastic graveyard of Loharu family according to Sunni rites. As in life, so in death nature conspired to thwart his will, for there is no doubt about his having embraced the Shia sect of Islam early in youth and he would, if he could, certainly have resented foisting of Sunni colours on him after his death.

The poet's death was deeply mourned throughout India. Several eminent poets wrote elegies on the occasion. The plaque on the tomb carries a piece by Mir Mehdi Majruh. The inscription reads : "The pride of Talib and envy of Urfi is dead—Asad Ullah Khan Ghalib is dead : Yesterday I sat kneeling grief-stricken beside my Ustad's tomb. When Hatif found me lost in thought for a piece about him he said : "The treasure and wealth of meaning lies buried under the dust."The original piece by Majruh published in Akmal-Al-Akhbar, however, was to the effect that when Hatif found me sitting beside my Ustad's tomb grief-stricken and in great distress he said : "Majruh if you are lost in thought for a piece about him, then just say : "The wealth and treasure of meaning lies buried under the dust". Apparently the piece was revised by Majruh later to read as it appears on the tomb today.

But the person most troubled and shocked by Ghalib's death was his wife Umrao Begum. With his passing away stopped all the sources of income for the house. Not only that. The poet had died in debt. The sum concerned totalled no less than Rs. 800. Being a person of deeply religious nature, Begum Ghalib was more concerned about clearing the debt than anything else, for she believed that Ghalib's soul would continue to be in agony till that was done. Her letter to the Nawab of Rampur written in August 1869, clearly reflects the trouble in her mind on this account besides describing the distressing condition in which she found herself. Writes she : 'Since the day Ghalib has died his hapless widow finds herself in such trouble and woe as defy description. Firstly, Ghalib died in debt to the tune of Rs. 800, secondly, the pension accorded by the British ceased and thirdly, the monthly salary of Rs. 100 which you used to send to the late Mirza in appreciation of his services was also suddenly stopped. So long I have lived on loans. Now I am unable to raise any loan either. The result is that now I find nothing but starvation staring in the face.

"The applicant desires that she be given such assistance as would clear the late Mirza of his obligation. Else he would be in great agony. If your Highness would arrange to pay off his debts it would be an act of great piety and good."

Begum Ghalib had also approached the British administration for the transfer of her husband's pension in the name of her adopted son Hossain Ali Khan. But

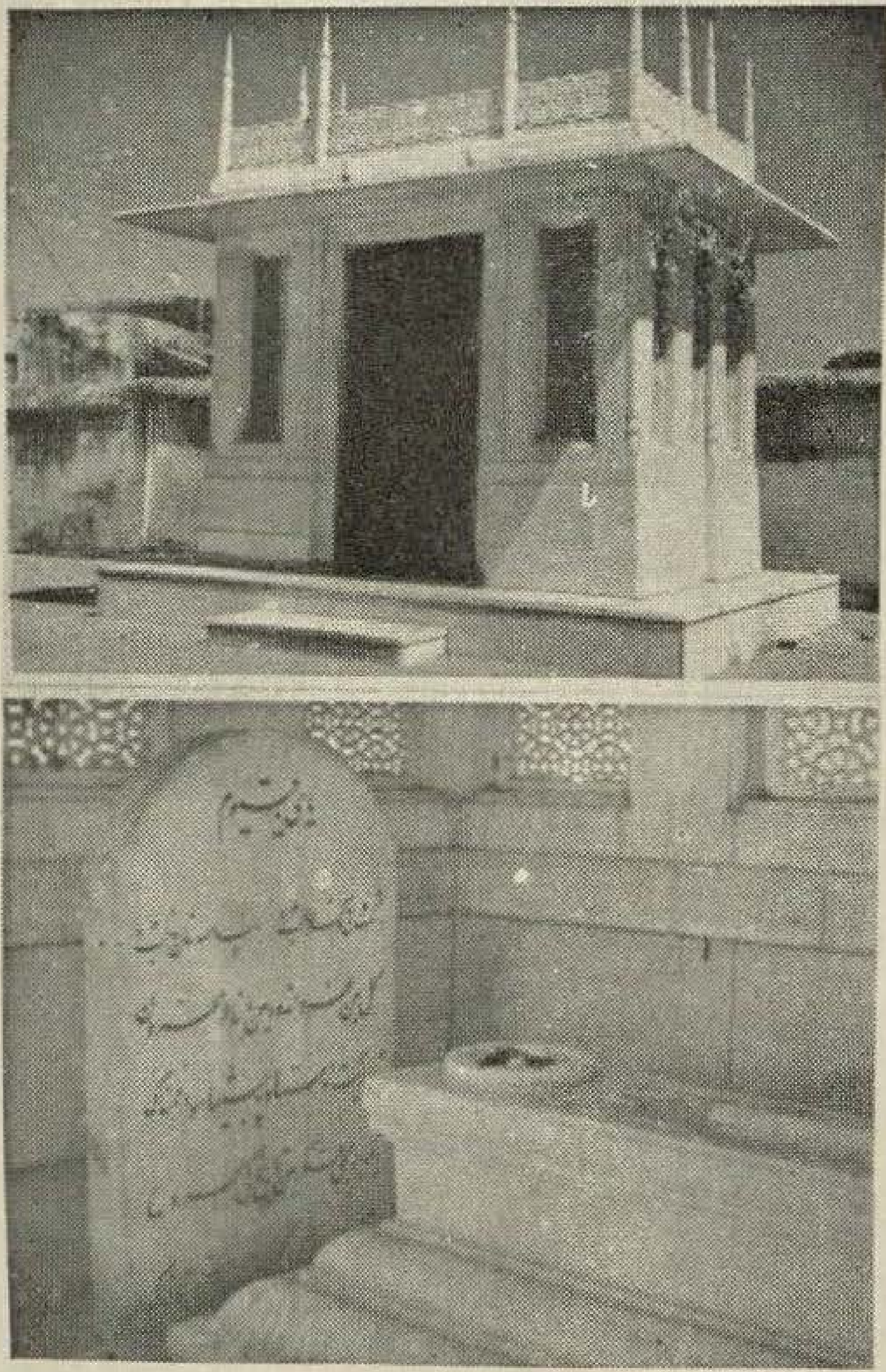
the request was not conceded. The Commissioner, however, agreed to make a monthly grant of Rupees 10 to the Begum to be collected by her in person from the Court. This she would never do. She preferred to die of starvation rather than appear in person in the Court and thereby bring 'disgrace and dishonour to the illustrious name of the family she came from.'

No assistance was given by Nawab Qalab Ali Khan to Umrao Begum to clear Ghalib's debt. Hossain Ali Khan was, however, employed at the Court of Rampur on a monthly salary of Rs. 25 soon after the poet's death. This served to help the family a little; but brought no peace to the Begum's troubled mind. She then turned to her own cousins, the Nawab of Loharu and his brother Nawab Ziauddin Khan, for help. Nawab Ziauddin Khan had whole of Ghalib's debt cleared from his personal account. The Nawab of Loharu, Mian Aminuddin, sanctioned a grant of Rs. 50 a month to be paid to Umrao Begum till her death. But she was not destined to receive it for long for she breathed her last on the first death anniversary of her husband. According to one account the Nawab of Rampur also ordered on November 8, 1869 a draft of Rs. 600 to be sent to Begum Ghalib. Maulana Mehar, a noted biographer of Ghalib, is, however, emphatic on the point that assistance in this respect came from Nawab Ziauddin Khan of Loharu. Sheikh Akram, another of Ghalib's biographers, also gives a similar account.

Seven children, boys and girls, were born unto Ghalib in his lifetime but none survived the age of fifteen. His adopted sons also passed away a few years after his

death. Nothing but his work was left to the world. But that was more than enough to immortalise him.

Ghalib's Tomb



Above : *Ghalib's Tomb in Delhi : the mausoleum was built few years back.*

Below : *The plaque on the tomb. The poet was buried in the dynastic cemetry of Loharu Dynasty in Nizamuddin.*

Chapter X

Ghalib's Work—A Critique

"THE literature of every nation has its writers and poets who are the pride of not only their native country but of the whole world, of entire mankind. Mirza Ghalib, the great poet of the Indian sub-continent, is one of those whose names are pronounced with love and admiration far beyond the boundaries of their country.

"The Soviet people love and cherish the memory of this remarkable poet who succeeded in blending the beauty of verse and imagery of the classical Persian and Urdu poets, Hafiz, Amir Khusru, Beydil and Mir Taqqi Mir, with the voice of the new era.

"The social motifs in Ghalib's works, his protest against injustice and oppression, and his call for unity and friendship amongst nations are especially understandable to the Soviet people...Soviet students of Ghalib's works make a particularly careful study of those verses of the poet which are imbued with lofty ideals of humanism and optimism and assert the triumph of life in all its manifestations. It is precisely such poems, as well as Ghalib's prose writings of this kind, that are specially popular with the Soviet people. However, scholars are also trying to explain those works by Ghalib which are permeated with pessimism and despair and made more complicated by Sufi terminology. In the opinion of Soviet scholars

this trend in Ghalib's works never predominated. It was traceable to the disappointment resulting from the failure of the national uprising.

"Ghalib could never reconcile himself to the enslavement of his homeland. The poet never fawned upon or cringed before the alien rulers. He enthusiastically greeted the great national uprising of 1857-1859 and with deep sorrow and indignation described the atrocities committed against the insurgents.

> 'We have to suffer the ruthless oppression
> Of Britain's despotic sons,
> Our squares are places of execution,
> Our homes have been turned into zindans' (jails),

Wrote the poet in bitterness and wrath."

The above quotations reflect a view of Ghalib's work and life shared by many even in India. The quotations are from an article titled 'Mirza Ghalib in the Soviet Union', by Yevgeni Chelyshev, Head of the Indian Philosophy Department, Institute of Oriental Studies USSR Academy of Sciences. The observations merit attention as they come from an Academician of a country where many scholars have engaged in research on Ghalib's life and work. It is, however, difficult to agree with Chelyshev's assessment of Ghalib's reaction to the national uprising of 1857, in view of the facts already stated in this book.

It was a great misfortune of the Urdu literature that Ghalib devoted the best part of his years to writing in Persian. He set great store by his writings and

composition in that language and regarded his work in Urdu but a poor reflection of his true art and genius. But it is his Urdu verse and writings that win for him an unrivalled place in the realm of Indian literature. His work in Persian, notwithstanding his complete command of the medium and mastery of construction, has drawn comparatively much less attention and appreciation. It is not much known in Iran either. In fact but for Amir Khusru no Indian writer of Persian has succeeded in attracting the attention and admiration of the Iranian intelligentsia.

As for Diwan-E-Ghalib, the collection of his verse in Urdu, the critics are almost unanimous in its high praise. The work is not without its flaws. Many an expression, as also construction, is open to question. Several couplets seem to have but little meaning. Some indeed are alleged to have been just translation into Urdu of the verse of renowned Persian poets. But the slim volume on the whole merits serious study and deserves high commendation for covering such varied aspects of human life and thought. There is originality of ideas as also deep intensity of feeling, combined with elegance of diction and excellence of expression.

According to Dr. Abdur Rahman Bijnauri "India has only two divine books—the 'Vedas' and the 'Diwan-E-Ghalib.' There is nothing in the world that one cannot find in the 'Diwan'. There is no form and style of verse which does not appear in its finest form in the book." As against this high laudation, Dr. Syed Adbul Latif declares that Ghalib cannot be numbered among the great

ones of the earth to say nothing of the greatest." His reasons: "In his Urdu verse there seems to be more of art, rather artifice than poetry; more of thought or imagination or fancy than feeling. Ghalib did not deviate much from the much-trodden path of Urdu poets. The same hoary themes come in treatment in his poetry. Only he gave them a new intellectual colouring. If he broke any new ground at all he did so in the domain of pessimism."

Neither Dr. Bijnauri, nor Dr. Latif, appears to have attempted a fair, balanced assessment of Ghalib's work. Each seems to have started with preconceived notions about the poet and with a set objective—Dr. Bijnauri's being to make Ghalib appear among the greatest poets and thinkers of the world and Dr. Latif's being to bring him out in his worst colours and prove his work to be just ordinary if not humbug. The result is that neither Dr. Bijnauri's "Mohasin Kalam-i-Ghalib" nor Dr. Latif's "Ghalib—A critical appreciation of his life and Urdu verse" carries conviction with the reader. He may be delighted by the elegance of Dr. Bijnauri's style and shocked by Dr. Latif's harsh and unkind expression, but he cannot escape an uneasy feeling that one is allowing his admiration for the the poet to swamp his judgment, while the other is being unduly harsh and unjust to him.

All art has a two-fold purpose to serve: To portray life and to elevate it. In poetry particularly, portrayal and not analysis is the primary function. Life being so-many-sided a true portrayal of its varied aspects and moods is no easy task. The degree of success in this

objective reflects the greatness of the work and the master. Consciousness of one's real self promotes the elevation of soul. It puts life on a higher and enlightened plane. How far has one succeeded in this regard should be the proper criterion to adjudge the quality and the greatness of a work of art. In the case of a poet one should also take into consideration the measure of his success in attuning feeling, sentiment, and thought to the music of words. Good verse should go straight to the heart. It must at once enthrill, enrapture and enchant the listener and the reader. Diction, and grammar are of the least importance. It is the content that really matters, not the cover, although the exterior form of the matter should also be pleasing and acceptable enough to the eye and the ear to induce one to fathom its depth.

Another important thing to be borne in mind by a critic while assessing the work of an artist, poet or writer is that there is hardly anything new in the world today. Almost every truth, every great idea, every emotion of human heart has been given expression to at sometime or the other. That leaves the scope for only restatement for a new entrant. For the artist, poet or writer himself it may not be a restatement but something original ; there being great truth in the adage that all great men think alike and all great minds perceive similar truths. But even if the writer be conscious of the earlier expression, and it be only a case of restatement, it would not detract from his effectiveness or charm. In fact a restatement may be more beautiful and touching than the original and affect a far larger section of humanity. In the case of restatement beauty of language, directness of appeal to

the human heart, and the distinct imprint on the idea of the writer's own intellect and genius are the principal considerations for criticism. Criticism of a writer or poet on the count that he has allowed the same old themes to come in for treatment in his work as have been touched upon by earlier writers is a very poor criticism at the best. In the case of Ghalib, even his worst critic admits of his having given them a 'new intellectual colouring'. That in itself is quite a justification for the poet's work. Presentation of an old thing in a new, and more pleasing colour is a difficult art and if one succeeds in that he has no mean achievement to his credit.

While the main function of literature is to portray and elevate life, not a small result of it is to enrich the language employed. All great writers give new words and expressions to their media. Many enrich their language familiarizing it with foreign similes and expressions which in course of time, become part of that language itself. That importation of foreign words and expressions makes a language more difficult cannot be held against the writer. The addition of foreign words, similes, and expressions only helps enrich a language, make it more living and more universal. And only those words and expressions can gain currency in a language as are needed by it. A deliberate attempt to evolve a highly inflated and difficult style is, however, another thing. Such attempt on the part of a renowned figure in literature can affect the general style in the field in a most undesirable way. But such influence can last only for a while. For, ultimately, the common reader, for whom all works of art are primarily meant, is bound to reject all

such work and thereby exercise a healthy corrective influence on the erring literateurs.

Deliberate employment of difficult, highly involved, uncommon, and for the general run of public virtually unintelligible expressions by a writer reflects an immature and adolescent mind. He does so in the mistaken belief that the more unintelligible one appears to the unknowing in his writings the more awed they are likely to be by his intellect and the more intelligent he is likely to be considered by them. With the advance of mature years he realises that in simplicity lies the greatness of the soul as also of nature. The simpler one is, the nearer he is to the nature and dearer to the heart. Artificiality in writing repels while naturalness attracts. Almost all writers, poets, and artists suffer from this defect in their early years. As maturity of mind has only a little relation to the advance of years, some overcome this defect early, while some continue to suffer from it till the very end of their life. In exact proportion to one's ability to overcome this flaw stands one's chance to rise, affect and influence the world around him.

Ghalib is primarily a lyrical poet and should be judged as such. As happens with almost all great writers and poets of the age, his admirers, in their excess of zeal, have tried to clothe his work with meaning and ideas as would win new popularity for him according to the currents of the times. Besides Dr. Bijnauri who makes an angel of Ghalib, there are writers, quite renowned and respected in the field of education and

literature in India, some of whom have tried to make him out the "apostle of Indian nationalism" and others who have tried to show him as a man of the masses and probably the first Indian progressive writer and litterateur. There are still others who hold that everything Ghalib wrote was with a set purpose and has some connection or the other with happenings in his own life.

It is not a very difficult task for a talented writer or critic to put such interpretations on the work of any writer or poet as would suit his purpose. But that is not being fair. With all the respect for these renowned writers and critics, one is constrained to observe that their contentions are without substance. Ghalib was certainly far from being a man of the masses. He detested common things of life. He always went in for something out-of-the-common, be it in the matter of dress, diet or something else. He was too fond of the British and too much prejudiced against the rebels of 1857, to have experienced any patriotic fervour of the soul, much less being an apostle of Indian nationalism. Nationalism in the modern sense was virtually unknown in his time.

It is also too much to say that everything he wrote was with a set purpose and has a direct bearing on some-aspect of his life. Most poems are composed in a mood of inspiration. Rich experience of one's life may provide good material for the poet to draw on. But his vivid imagination plays no mean role in the work either. One may just experience a moment of inspiration and compose

something which he may never have intended to do. Moreover a poet as a rule is neither a reformer nor a philosopher. He is just a painter of words, giving word-pictures of the experiences of soul and feelings of the heart as he is impelled to in those moments of inspiration. That is not to say that nothing is composed to a set order. All political, and nationalist poetry is evidently composed with a set purpose and design. But that forms but an insignificant part of world poetry of the ages. It is the man and the nature in their truer form, which form the subject-matter of poetry.

As for Ghalib being the first progressive writer of the age, progressive being synonymous with leftist according to the writers who have used that expression for him, the very idea appears to be preposterous. Communism was totally unknown in India at the time. There was no chance for Ghalib to have been influenced by the ideal. His humanism is, however, a different thing. And so also his feelings for the labour. But he has no prejudice whatsoever against the landed aristocracy or other vested interests. Far from that he spent several years of his life in seeking privileges and honours due to a noble of the landed aristocracy. Moreover the country on the whole was free from any labour or peasants' trouble. Industrialization at the time was yet a far cry and the peasant-landlord relations had not as yet assumed that acrimonious form as would provoke thinking on the part of the intelligentsia. There was no student unrest either. nor even the problem of unemployment. As such there was no question of any writer or poet giving thought to these non-existent problems which have come to be known

as the prime concern of the progressive writers of the age.

There is, however, no doubt that Ghalib as a man was progressive in his outlook. But his progressiveness meant only a revolt against the vested interests in the field of education and literature. He favoured new ideas in the field and tried to blaze new trails in the realm of poetry. He was unconventional in his approach to poetry and treatment of various themes. He was also opposed to the out-moded social and religious customs. In fact in the matter of religion he was most liberal and tolerant and as such most progressive. But that is not the sense in which some leftist writers of the present century have called Ghalib 'the first progressive writer of India.'

Ghalib's contribution to enriching the Urdu language and literature is indeed magnificient. He brought numerous Persian similes and expressions into the language and gave it several new words and many of its old words new meanings and construction. As already stated he blazed a new trail in the art of letter-writing. His letters have become part of Urdu literature. And he was the first to introduce Sehra-writing in Urdu verse which unfortunately at the time started a bitter controversy between him and the Court-Poet Zauq for which he had ultimately to tender an unqualified apology to the King. In the realm of Urdu poetry he stands far above his contemporaries and is in fact a class by himself. In his approach to the problems of life and the world he is more like the famous German writer, poet and philosopher Goethe than anyother Western literateur. His work has the same

universality of outlook and capability of being put to melodious music as Goethe's. In his personal approach to various worldly problems he exhibits the philosophy of Spinoza.

Main criticism levelled against Ghalib is two-fold: Firstly, that he adopted Ghazal as the principal form of his expression and secondly, that there is little of nature in his verse. Ghazal, the critics further point out, by the very nature of its construction provides little scope for expressing profound thought in verse. And the lack of nature in verse is a serious draw-back in the work of any poet.

It is true that continuity of thought is not the usual characteristic of a Ghazal. Each couplet in it is complete by itself. Rhyming of the last word provides the only connecting link. Many a poet sets out to compose a Ghazal just after a particular rhyme and style. But that was not the case with Ghalib. He no doubt kept the rhyme in view. But his main consideration was to give adequate expression to his inner thought and feelings. He himself acknowledged the inadequacy and imperfection of the medium. But that unfortunately happened to be the only popular medium available. There was no alternative to that. All he could do was to give the Ghazal a new form and style and broaden its scope as best as he could. This he did admirably. Very few of Ghalib's Ghazals are like those of his contemporaries or predecessors. Apart from dealing with such varied aspects of human life and thought many of them have a remarkable continuity of theme and idea. Even those that

lack this quality do not jar on the ear or the eye. There are no jolting links in the chain. Even the independent couplets smoothe into a harmonious whole. Despite all its imperfections Ghalib utilises the medium of Ghazal to give expression to some of the profoundest thoughts and feelings of man.

As for the lack of nature in his poetry, the criticism is again not very strong. It is true that there are no pieces in his work written in praise of mountains, vales or the lakes. But none of these formed part of his environment. There were, however, other phenomena of nature which deeply influenced his mind and made him pour out his heart in verse. These were the beauties of the dawn the glories of the monsoon, and charms and excitements of the days in winter. Vivid pen-portraits of these phenomena as experienced by him are drawn both in his Urdu and Persian verse. It is, therefore, incorrect to say that there is little of nature in his verse implying thereby that he was not much moved by its phenomena.

Still another attack made against Ghalib's verse by some critics, is that he adopts a highly Persianised style, uses far-fetched similes and is almost incapable of understanding at several places. One of his contemporary poets, Hakim Agha Jan Aish, had composed a satirical quatrain about Ghalib's verse in this regard which translated literally read : "If you alone understand what you say then what is the good of that understanding. The real pleasure of saying something lies in its being understood by others. We understand what Mir says and also what Mirza says,

but what he says is understood either by himself or by God". But this quatrain does not pertain to the collected verse of Ghalib as appearing in his "Diwan". It has reference only to his verse of early days dealt with in an earlier Chapter. Ghalib himself seems to have endorsed this view by undertaking a drastic revision of his work for inclusion in his 'Diwan.' Several hundred lines were not only considered unfit by him for inclusion in his Diwan but he also made an unequivocal declaration that verse attributed to me other than what is included in this 'Diwan' should not be considered as mine". There are still several lines in the 'Diwan' which have been interpreted diversely by various scholars, and some which have been characterized as being without any rational meaning by a few critics, but the woık on the whole is not validly open to such criticism.

What are the most outstanding characteristics of Ghalib's verse, and what does account for his immense popularity among the intelligentsia in India ? That is the question generally asked by those unacquainted with Urdu language and literature.

The most distinguishing character of Ghalib's verse is its universal nature and profound understanding of human mind. The lines have a charming lyrical quality coupled with unusual wit and humour. The most difficult themes are dealt with in a masterly way and in such a simple and direct language as to be easily understood by the common man. They go direct to tho heart and stir the soul. The reader experiences discovery of new truths and ideas simultaneous with the perusal of the lines.

As Ghalib himself puts it in one of his couplets, he feels as if whatever was said came straight from his heart. That is the quality that endears Ghalib to the intelligentsia and makes him beloved of the masses as well. His lines moreover are easily set to music and become popular hits. "Mirza Ghalib" a picture produced by a well-known Indian film director, Sohrab Modi, few years back proved a great box-offiice success mainly because of his Ghazals. Other Indian producers have also drawn on his Ghazals in their films with great benefit to themselves. They became popular tunes and ensured success for their films.

Among the Europeon writers and poets, the German philosophical writer and poet, Goethe, comes nearest to Ghalib. Both Goethe and Ghalib symbolize the highest development of human thought in verse, touching upon almost every aspect of life. Each is a master of his art and excels in the choice of *mot propre.* Both provide a meeting place between the old and the new, making a determined bid to break away from the traditions of the past and blaze a new trial. A certain measure of clairvoyance is discernible in the work of both Goethe and Ghalib. But there is one marked difference in their approach to the problems of life. Goethe begins with the superficial to penetrate into the real, while Ghalib proceeds from a study of the innerself first to view the exterior form. Goethe reached the pinnacle of fame and glory during his life-time but Ghalib's real position and worth in the Indian literature got acknowledged only after his death. Goethe's works run into several volumes, but Ghalib's claim to greatness is established

by a single volume of 100 and odd pages which immortalizes him.

Ghalib's philosophy of life resembles that of Spinoza, the Seventeenth century classical philosopher. Like Spinoza, Ghalib believes all reality being one in substance, one in cause, and one in origin ; and God and this reality being one and the same. In his view mind and matter are one ; every particle of reality inseparably composed of the physical and psychical. Objective of philosophy, therefore, is to perceive unity in diversity, mind in matter, and matter in mind ; to find the synthesis in which the opposites and contradictions meet and merge ; and to rise to that highest knowledge of universal unity which is the intellectual equivalent of the love of God.

Ghalib, in his works, strives for this ideal of philosophy. Substance for him is insubstantial as, in his view, substance is a form and not the matter. The world is one of determinism and not of design. Permanent happiness lies only in the pursuit of knowledge and the joy of understanding. The greatest good is the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole nature. The more it understands its forces and the order of nature, the easier it becomes for itself to secure freedom from attachment to useless things. There is no remedy for social ills except through elimination of every form of envy, recrimination and hatred. To be great is not to be placed above humanity, but to stand above the partialities and futilities of un-informed desire and to rule oneself. Following this method of philosophy Ghalib

rises from the fitful pleasures of passion to the high serenity of contemplation which sees all things as part of an eternal order and whole, and learns to smile in the face of the inevitable, however unpleasant. Indeed, he learns even to enjoy pain !

It has been said by many eminent critics of Urdu literature that a study of the Diwan-E-Ghalib on the whole leaves on one the impression of Ghalib being a poet of despair and pessimism. While it is true that pessimism seems to reach a new low in some of his couplets and several of them breathe of utter despair and lack of hope, it would be unfair to hold that Ghalib's poetry is primarily a poetry of despair and pessimism. As a famous English poet has put it, our sweetest songs are those which tell us of our saddest thoughts. Notwithstanding the truth of another famous English saying 'laugh and the world laughs with you, weep and you weep alone , harrowing tales of woe leave a more lasting impression on the human mind than stories of cheer and happiness. As it happens almost every great writer and poet tends to exploit this direct appeal to human heart as best as he can in his work. The mere presence of this element in a work can not render that work as a product of a man in despair, or one with a pessimistic outlook on life. The real questions to be asked in such a case are : 'What is the object of such expression ? And does the writer suggest any way out ?" There are only extremely rare people in the world who experience nothing but joy and cheer in their life. For most life happens to be either uneventful or dominated by unfortunate and unhappy occurrences. Art has to portray life on the

whole. It cannot afford to ignore reality, howsoever. unpleasant it may be.

Fortunately Ghalib's verse has several pieces which are of great help to a man in woe and despair. He portrays life as it ought to be, brings out its deception and futility, but then offers a bit of paternal advice to sustain a sinking soul and provide it a healthy buoyancy. He exhibits a delightfully unconcerned concern about life. As in one of his couplets :

'The very Heavens move in a cycle day and night,'
Something is bound to happen, why should I take fright ?"

Or as in another :

"Man unto himself is a world of thought ;
Solitude with me anon into multitude is wrought."

He also gives sound advice to counteract jealousy, vice, pride, and even despair. For instance :

"Woe ceases to be woe,
If it does man oft hound ;
So many my difficulties, Lo !
They have their own solution found.

or "Of your high position in the world,
Be ye never so proud,
For, 'a fall from heights,' the wise word,
'Fate for man does ever shroud."

He takes the world in one single sweep by declaring :

"The world for me is naught but child's play : With a frivolous show on night and day" and exhibits none of the depressed nature of a pessimist. On the contrary there are not a few of his couplets which would impel a man to action rather than throw him down. And there are several other pieces which enable him to develop a detached outlook and cultivate that rare yet so-essential human quality of having a laugh at himself. It is this quality of Ghalib's verse which takes the sting out of his seemingly pessimistic pieces also. And some of these pieces are mellowed by mystic thought. For instance when he says : "God was my pre-existence ; God would be my non-existence ; Existence mars my existence, Ah ! what lies in non-existence !" or "Tis difficult for any task to be easy, It is not easy even for man to be a Man."

He has wit and humour and loves to enjoy life as best as he can. He knows the good of pious acts but is not inclined that way. Wine has a strong appeal for him and seems to be a source of great inspiration as when he declares in one of his couplets : "Set here the glass, wine and flask : Then watch the flow and spell of talk". And so great is his thirst for wine that he has to say : "I would drink if I see a few barrels of wine: What are these cups, glasses and flasks that you before me line". Even the Almighty does not escape the shafts of his joyful wit and humour. Says he : "O' God, call me not for my sins to account : For the heart-burns of desires unfulfilled I do recount. And at another place: 'Had I so many a heart-burn to befall my lot : Then O' Lord, you should have given me many a heart.' And this couplet of his bespeaks of his confidence and hope which no pessimist

can ever have :

'She would have come round one day,
Had I some days more in life to stay.'

But with all his love for life and wine, the ideal he wishes to live by, is to overcome all his wants and yearnings, forgive the sins of others and ignore the wrongs done to him. He wishes to attain that sense of equanimity, that peace of mind which can spring out of only a life fully and well-lived. His advice to the world is ;

"If thou be sure of God thy prayer to grant,
Then ask for naught but a heart without a want"

And also ;

"Hear not, if one talks ill of you ;
Speak not, if one does evil too ;
Hold him back that be misled,
Let forgiveness his wrongs wed ;
Is there one in this world without a want,
Whose prayer then should one grant ?
Ghalib why complain of anyone
When the very hope of life be gone."

And after having enjoyed all the worldly things of life he wishes to retire to a corner where he has none except himself to live by. The piece below, interpreted by some as a piece of despair, voices the feelings of one who wants to shake off the fetters of the world and experience the joys and thrills of a completely liberated soul, under

obligation to none.

> "Let me now, forever to a place,
> Forever, where there is none of my race ;
> None my language to understand,
> None my worries to expand ;
> Neither door nor wall to shield
> The house I myself should build ;
> None to tend if sick I lie,
> None to mourn if there I die".

Love is the other theme which runs through most of Ghalib's Ghazals, Love in fact is the principal theme of a Ghazal in urdu and before Ghalib's time was almost the only theme, Ghalib alone broadened its scope to bring in other subjects. The object of love in Urdu poetry is referred to in masculine form. The reference may be to a real object or it may pertain to the Almighty. Most couplets in Urdu verse are capable of both interpretations.

Love by poets in Asia, as a whole, and in India, in particular, has been conceived as an emotion *spelling* misery, trouble, and destruction for the lover. The lover is invariably faithful and the beloved faithless. A happy union is an impossibility. There are bound to be rivals in the field and the beloved likely to be more favourably inclined to them than to her true lover. All except the lover are motivated by base sexual urges. His is the only platonic love. A miserable death is the only end of the lover. In fact love makes him experience a constant death in life.

Urdu poetry has no concept of love bringing joy and cheer to the lover except through the pain and misery inflicted on him by the cruel acts of the beloved. The beloved is often a courtesan, or one almost similarly placed, and hence all the mention of her being under the influence of drink and indulging in coquettish acts. The lover cannot dream of dropping his love and taking some other infection to the eye. He must also exercise restraint and care in his overtures to the beloved. In no case must he appear to be bold and impatient. Moans, wails, sighs and patience, must be his qualities. The beloved on the other hand must always be cheerful, happy, and lost in pursuit of pleasures of life. She should deliberately keep away from the lover aud subject him to innumerable trials and tribulations. She must always devise new ways and means to torture his soul. Only when he is on death-bed or when he has actually passed away, must she come to him and realize the cruelties of her past acts and repent. Till then she should keep him on false hopes and promises.

The above, in brief, is the picture of love presented on the whole in Urdu poetry from its earliest times to the present day. This has been characterized as a morbid, unnatural trait of Urdu verse by several critics. It is against this tradition of some three hundred years of Urdu poetry that Ghalib's work in this field is to be judged. He could not possibly make a complete break with the tradition. All he could do was to introduce a little more of sanity into love and make the lover develop some sense of self-respect, dignity and independence of character. And these are the outstanding features of Ghalib's love lyrics.

which distinguish him from the poets of the old school. Ghalib's love is no less tortuous and coy, and he no less faithful and true than lovers in Urdu verse as a rule. But he has a delightfully refreshing concept of love. 'Love' for him "is a fire raging unrestrained, neither by wish begun nor by will contained." Nevertheless he experiences through its media a new-found joy and an exciting thrill when he declares :

> "Love to me the very joy of life has brought
> A cure for the pain, a pain without cure, all unsought"

This is an unusual expression of feeling for mass of the Urdu poets, for they see in love nothing but a road to the realm of unending pain, agony and affliction.

Not that Ghalib is not aware of this aspect of love unfulfilled to which Shakespeare makes an illusion in the Romeo-Juliet saying :

> 'Love is a smoke rais'd with the fume of sighs ;
> Being purg'd, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes ;
> Being vex'd a sea nourish'd with lovers' tears :"

In fact many of his ghazals deal with this aspect of love and vividly portray the living Hell in life which is the lot of a disappointed lover. But he does not lose hope and has a remarkable tenacity of faith. He is not discouraged by the cruel ways of love for he feels that such is love's course as a rule. He retains his sense of humour and displays his ready wit even in such a situation. In fact he learns to find pleasure in pain and would have

himself condemned if he did not do that. He knows 'sighs to take effect need an age'', and also that 'the thing called love is but for madness another word'', but he is unmindful of all that and joyously proclaims :

'Mine not love, let it madness be,
Let my madness bring fame to thee''

And sensing the great embarrassment to which the beloved is put by being seen in his company, he whispers with a mischievous twinkle in his eye into his beloved's ear :

'If my company doth bring bad name to thee,
Then in private, and not in public, let us be !''

Love for Ghalib is indispensable. It holds him in a tight grip. There is no escape. To use the poet's words "In the very first field of love I have sorely hurt my feet, : Nor can I stand there now nor beat a retreat." He has his own plans to get equal with his tormentors. Indeed he is confident of that. Just mark his lines :

"In Heaven I will take full revenge upon these sons
of fairies fair,
If by Grace of God I find 'em turn as *Houries*
there''

Ghalib totally differs from his pedecessors in enjoining on the lovers to be platonic in their emotion and restrained in their overtures. He makes bold to say :

"Love is mad and loves a love pert ;
Love under restraint is but love hurt'.

He gives a chance to his beloved to correct herself : 'Call me back any time you wish to be kind : For I am not time past that is ever left behind', is his sporting offer. And this not withstanding his unfortunate experience in her company which he narrates in his following couplet :

"I said : 'strangers from our 'midst should go',
The cruel love made me quit, and said : 'you
wished it so ?' "

But there are moments when he finds himself on the verge of revolt. He is not ever to remain at his beloved's door-step for he is a man and not a stone. Moreover there are not a few beauties to whom he can turn for solace in place of his cruel love. He becomes conscious of his sense of self-respect and dignity and makes a firm declaration that if his love stands on prestige and sticks to her ways, he too would go his own way. Now he detests making a complaint. For when there is no 'heart left in the side why should one keep a tongue in his cheek.' That is his counsel.

There are also moments when he gives the impression of being utterly down and out. When he does no more have a heart of which he was once proud ; when he experiences no emotions and thrills and in fact has no thought of love. He is then disgusted with his very life and makes it known to his love asking her not to remind

him that he once called her 'my love, my life'' But this is a passing mood. He soon recovers his usual cheerful adventurous self and is out in search of new thrills and excitements. He wants to relive his earlier experience and gives beautiful expression to his inner yearnings and desires in his Ghazal opening with the line " 'Tis an age I had my love my house to grace." This is in line with human nature. Optimism and not pessimism is the rule of life ; although no one can escape moments of utter despair at some time or the other in this world. But man being the most adaptable of all creatures, what appears at first to be wholly intolerable and the very end of life in the course of time loses its sting and becomes after all not so bad. Then Man sees new hope and regains in some measure his earlier courage and ardour. That is what sustains him in life. Difference in degrees of this quality of man, distinguish the strong from the weak. Ghalib displays no mean degree of strength of character in this regard. And that should to a great extent clear him of the charge of being a poet of despair and pessimism. In fact that is what makes him beloved of the masses. He portrays the moods of despair in the life of Man with as real a poignancy and bitterness as are capable of being experienced by one. But his object is not to make him lose hope, but realize the reality of life and attain an enlightened sense of equanimity. He learns not to be vanquished by griefs and troubles, but to overcome them and emerge smiling and cheerful as a Man.

In matters of religion Ghalib gives the impression of being a materialistic mystic ; having faith in the fundamentals and displaying utter disregard and contempt

for its superficial rituals and ceremonies. Here his work pulsates with respectful tolerance of all religions. Sincerity and steadfastness of belief, in his view, constitute the principal test of true faith. According to him even a Brahmin dying in a temple of idols is entitled to burial in the Kabba if he lives upto his expectations. He has no love for Heaven. Indeed his work betrays a lack of faith in the very concept of Paradise. Paradise for him holds no charm, no attraction. He would rather have it immersed in Hell to eliminate the element of greed and desire for reward in prayer and worship of the Almighty. As for himself, he is prepared to forego his place in Paradise for a life in this world, for Heaven cannot give him pleasure according to his measure. In one of his pieces in Persian he vividly narrates the limitations Paradise is likely to impose on his desires and yearnings and how dull and intolerable it is likely to become as a result. In an Urdu couplet addressed to his beloved he also declares :

> What a fight would there be with Heaven's guard,
> Were I to remember thy house there, Oh, my Lord !

Ghalib constitutes a turning point in the history and development of Urdu verse. No other poet of Urdu verse upto his time seems either to have attempted to present a complete picture of life or succeeded in breaking away from the traditional mode of composition limited by a few select subjects. Ghalib was neither a philosopher nor a preacher ; nor did he ever try to fall into the role of a propagandist. He contented himself with being just a poet. But he was not a mere poet in the accepted

sense of the term in those days ; concerned with intellectual themes, and poetry of highflown and sometimes far-fetched ideas and imagination. He was a man, almost a complete man, with rich experience of life and profound understanding of his mind. The more he understood himself, the more he tried to overcome his short-comings. This both in his real life and in the sphere of his verse. And this constantly helped him take his life to a higher and still higher plane ; finding pleasure in woe ; joy in distress ; and calm in turbulance and storm. His work throughout scintillates with his characteristic humour, combined with his unique understanding of human mind and experience of the problems of life, which profoundly influences the reader.

For the succeeding generations of Urdu poets over the time also, Ghalib's verse has acted as a guiding star. It has served as a source of great inspiration for them to break new ground in the field in various directions. Urdu verse today is no more concerned with beauty and love alone. It embraces the whole sphere of life and there are not a few pieces of note which deal with the current political, social and economic problems of the world as well. While the spread of Western education and ideals has had its due impact on the development of Urdu poetry, it owes not a small debt to Ghalib for its present growth. It was he who first blazed the trail following which other poets have helped it achieve its present stature and form. But no Urdu poet has so far succeeded in presenting a more understanding and complete picture of human life than Ghalib in his verse. His work still stands as a class by itself. To quote one of his couplets :

'There is many another famous poet in the world,
But Ghalib, it is said, is different in style and word.

Time has only helped accentuate this difference between him and others,

PART II

GHALIB'S VERSE

The World And I

The world for me is naught but child's play,
With a frivolous show on night and day ;
There is nothing in the wonders of Solomen's throne,
And Jesus' miracles by me are but lightly borne ;
The whole Universe I accept but in name,
And for me all worldly things are just the same ;
Before me desert in sand takes it's refuge,
And Earth in tribute draws the Rivers' deluge ;
I have conceit and pride, that is true ;
But why not, when I have her to view ?
Set here the glass wine and flask,
Then watch the flow and spell of talk.
How can I stop her mention before me ?
For, jealousy for hate can easily taken be !
Myself pulled alike by Faith and Sin I find ;
With Church before me and Kaaba behind,
I am a lover but loves by me are ever deceived ;
Even Majnu by Laila before me is ill-conceived !
All are happy to bed their love, but none in joy so dies,
My wish in days of separation now wed to reality lies ;
A sea of blood gushes forth through my heart,
Would that were all, but see yet what more the smart !
Though no strength to move the hand there be,
There is yet sparkle in the eye ;
Touch not the cup, the flask and wine before me ;
Stay ! Let them there still lie.
A friend, a colleague, a conscience-keeper Ghalib be,
Why talk ill of him ? Well, at least before me !

Let Me Now......

Let me now forever to a place,
Forever, where there is none of my race ;
None my language to understand,
None my worries to expand ;
Neither door nor wall to shield
The house I myself should build ;
None to tend if sick I lie,
None to mourn if there I die.

Of My Love

As the cup of wine to her lips she drew,
Each drop of wine stood as on grass the dew ;
Stunned with her beauty, sparkling like a pearl,
Each drop in the cup itself into a necklace did hurl ;

What tortures now, with her to trust
My love, that each time she must
At me in such sudden rage fly,
Even when she hears my rival sigh !

If Thou Be Sure......

If thou be sure of God thy prayer to grant,
Then ask for naught but a heart without a want ;
O' God call me not for my sins to account,
For, heart-burns of desires unfulfilled I do recount.

No Hope Is Fulfilled

No hope is fulfilled,
No ray of light ;
Death has a date,
Why no sleep at night ?

My heart's plight made me laugh before,
Nothing ever does so now ;
Piety and good's return I know,
But the way I'm uninclined to go.

Something keeps me mum,
Else know I not to talk ?
Why not cry aloud, for, unheard,
Her remembrance does me stalk ;

If the heart-burn be not seen, doctor,
Gives it no burning smell ?
I am there, where myself does
Me nothing of myself tell !

I die in the wish to die,
Death comes, but is not there ;
What a face to go to Kaaba, Ghalib !
But thou—too shameless to care.

Sighs To Take Effect......

Sighs to take effect need an age,
Who lives that long thy tresses to embrace ?
A thousand crocodiles do the tides encage,
See, what fate, a drop to turn a pearl, does face !

Love calls for patience,
Passion all madness be !
What shall I do, till the heart within,
Weeping, white doth bleed ?

I know on hearing of it,
To rush to me you shall not delay ;
But dead shall I be
By the time, the word goes your way.

The dew from the first rays of Sun,
Has ever learnt to die ;
I, too, bide but one look of love
From thee, from here to fly.

Life has no more time
To stay, or live by ;
Than a spark takes
To kindle, and to die.

By whom save death, Ghalib,
Can Life of its woes be shorn ?
For know ye not that the candle
Anyway burns, and lingers till the morn.

A Wish

I am pertinent to her, yet not a word !
Were she drunk, she'd be beside herself ;
Terror, or calamity, whatever thou art in the world,
Would that only thou wert for myself !
Had I so many a heart-burn to befall my lot,
Then O' Lord you should have given me many a
heart !
She would have come round one day,
Had I some days more in life to stay.

My Heart is Set on Something

My heart is set on something,
If there be some more days to live ;
The fire of Hell is nothing
To the pain, woes within give.

I've known her grouses many a time before,
But now 'tis of a different sort ;
Bearer gives the letter, but looks still more
At my face ! Sure, some verbal message to part.

Stars often cut short people's life,
That child of their's gives a different woe ;
All troubles over, end of unhappy strife,
Sudden death, Ghalib, alone to follow now.

Let Someone Be......

Let someone be Holy Mary's Son,
What care I until cured by one ?
True, the world by law must go,
But with a murder like this, what to do ?

Her gait like an arrow,
That from a full strung bow doth race ;
In a heart like that,
One should find his place.

The very tongue is pulled out
On saying a word there ;
She must talk it all,
And one quietly hear !

What rot in madness
Do I talk, O' God !
I would that none
Gets a word, O' Lord !

Hear not, if one talks ill of you ;
Speak not, if one does evil too ;
Hold him back that be misled,
Let forgiveness his wrongs wed.
Is there one in this world without a want ?
Whose prayer then should one grant ?

What did Khizar to Alexander do ?
Whom to accept as leader now ?
Ghalib, why complain of anyone,
When the very hope of life be gone ?

To His Heart

What is the matter with thee my foolish heart,
What's there after all to cure thy smart ?
I am all afire and she in disgust !
O' Lord ! what's it ? Why so it must ?
I too keep a tongue in my cheek,
Would that thou ask what I seek !

When Thou art the sole Creator,
What is all this storm ?
What are these fair faces,
What their pride and charm ?
What the sweet curly hair,
What the thrilling lovely eye ?
What's this cloud and the breeze,
What the rose and the Sky ?

I expect faithfulness from one,
Who knows not Faith's way !
Do good, would do you good,
What else can a Darvesh say ?
I give my very life for you,
I know not what is prayer ;
Agreed Ghalib, 'tis nothing,
But if had free, what's wrong there ?

Love is Mad

Love is mad,
And loves a love pert ;
Love under restraint,
Is but love hurt.

You shall have
A kiss of that lip one day ;
But with courage,
And passion's madness to waylay.

Life Futile

God was my pre-existence,
God would be my non-existence ;
Existence mars my existence,
Ah ! what lies in non-existence !

Deadened by pain and sorrow,
What care I to be beheaded ;
Unbeheaded, this head
To lie at my knees would have headed !

A Thought

On Id day each, in his arms,
His love shall meet ;
While I with tears in eyes,
The doors and walls shall greet !

A Counsel

If thou by jealousy be upset,
Keenly watch the world, broad and wide ;
Broaden thy view to broaden thy heart best ;
To make thee higher rise, thy jealousy to subside.

So much to sin
As by heart desired ;
Expanse of seven seas
But part of my sea of Sin !
Were she by the garden
To come out with her graces inspired,
Each particle of earth,
Like dove, a plaint of love would begin.

Reality

Matter and its sublimation are intertwined,
Like the garden and the soft morning breeze ;
As the river's bank to check river's spate un-inclined,
So am I myself to hold when Thou doth Saki's role seize

A Change

Like bubbles in tide, no end for my tiring steps,
A desert's expanse hard to lessen my wander-lust ;
I loved the garden once but now it gapes,
And fragrance of flowers fills me with disgust.

I Wouldnt Bemoan My Lot......

I would'nt bemoan my lot
Had I one aft' my heart,
And amongst the nymphs that Heaven abound
I were but to find you around.

Bury me not in your street,
Why should thereby people meet
The way to the place
That your house doth grace ?

I would that you only keep in mind
The honour that you to Saki's role does bind ;
Else I am wont to drink everyday,
Whatever of wine may come my way.

I say naught to you
My friend, but if you do
Find someone on the way,
Bid him to her my '*Salaams*' convey.

I could also show to you
All that Majnu did ever do,
Only if I could be free
From the woes and travails within me.

To follow Khizar is not for me,
He just another wayfarer be ;
O' ye the dwellers of Love's street,
Just look out, if you the light-headed Ghalib meet.

A Dilemma

Even if ever a thought
Of doing some good there be,
Thoughts of her past wrongs
Make her blush to face me !

My heart's desires
Have an opposite effect, O' God !
The more I wish here near,
The more she is drawn away, O' My Lord !

She is short of temper,
And mine a long tale of woe;
Be brief, even the bearer
Dreads with it there to go.

There is such lack of faith !
And here, such want of strength !
Nor would she ever talk,
Nor can I speak at length !

Hold ye back O' despair,
What sort of catastrophe it be ?
Even thoughts of my love,
Are near gone from me !

True ever over-anxious
Am I her to see,
But how can I stand it,
That she should ever seen be ?

In the very first field of love,
I have sorely hurt my feet ;
Nor can I stand there now,
Nor beat a retreat !

Woe betide Ghalib one I would'nt trust to God,
Goes with my rival now, Oh, my Lord !

Marvellous

When of Laila's coming for Majnu
In the desert she heard,
She was startled and said :
'Happens so also in the world ?'

Ghalib I take pity on her tender heart,
To try my love, let her not for tortures start.

Have Mercy

Have mercy on your lover,
He does on death-bed lie ;
Like the waning smoke
From a candle about to die.

'Tis my heart's call
That keeps me on love's way,
Knowing full well
Nothing but ruin there ever lay !

A Reverie

To cheer me she would
In dreams, my company keep ;
Only if my restless heart
Were ever to let me sleep.

Mightier than the mighty sword
Of those that ever reigned,
Are your tears to kill,
Though they be tears feigned.

Just a quiver of lips
And have done with me,
If not a kiss
Let a scold there be.

Pour it out into hands-cupped Saki,
If thoū doth hate me,
Give me not the cup if you wish,
But let wine there be.

Asad my hands and feet
With joy did swell,
As to press her feet a bit,
She did me tell !

Give Up Hope

Give up all hope, ye desires ;
My heart is lost in sea of tears :
Like a candle unburnt one expires,
Am I with grief that me slowly wears.

Let Yourself Go......

Let yourself go one day,
Free with me while I drink ;
Else I'll tease you someday,
Saying that wine makes me sink"

Of your high position in the world,
Be ye never so proud ;
For, 'a fall from heights', the wise word,
"Fate for Man does ever shroud".

Though I took the wine on loan,
Yet, I knew full well :
I'll have it oneday to own,
And it would upon me heavily tell !

Even all these plaints of woe,
You should for a blessing take ;
For your soul must from here one day go,
And of Life's joyous music a deathly silence make.

That embodiment of charm and grace,
Was not wont to slap or beat ;
It was I, Ghalib, who did her menacing face,
And got that well-merited treat.

A Question

Pain sought not cure's aid ;
'Tis well, that I am'nt well ;
Why gather the rivals, my maid ?
'Tis for a scene or grouse, well ?

To whom shall I go my love to try,
When you put me not to sword ?
How sweet your lips, the words that pass by
In anger or abuse, mean not a word !

Everyone is talking of her coming,
And the house-carpet is not there today !
Was it to God or Nimrud I was praying,
That prayer brought no good at all my way !

I gave my life, but it was given by Him,
In faith I have'nt yet cleared my debt ;
Blood through wounds coverd still flows to the brim
But I, through ways blocked, am to charge yet.

'Tis the way of a robber, and not of love,
So to snatch my heart, and run away ;
Ghalib say something her to move,
'Tis said 'He could'nt say a Ghazal today'.

Content

Though many be the woes of world,
There is wine enough them to drown ;
Cares of Life can never in me herd,
For my Saki wears Kausar's Crown.
Why complain if you do my rival friend ?
Know I not your torture's ways ?
Ghalib's verse had fire and sting in the end ;
But now 'tis cold and calm in all he says.

A Reflection

Like the sun bracing the morning's breath,
My love's heart-burns brace me even in death ;
Proud, as the poor of the lost gold,
Or, the flower-vendor of the flowers sold,
Am I of heart-burns of hoary past,
That even in death so grace my heart ;
Though no more the wine-blood in my vein.
She is still anxious that of me to drain !

A Revelation

All love, anxious to be stıuck by love's lightning,
I deeply regret my instinct to preserve life;
Like the banks of River ever changing,
Is my thirst for wine ! Saki, how much to provide ?

Love's Way

I am assailed by my woeful heart
For not talking to my love,
But what to do, when I dare not,
And nothing can her move ?

I call her out,
But I wish O' heart !
It were so, that
She could'nt but for me start !

Lest she forego or forget,
Since for her all this a play be !
I pray to God, she would'nt rest
Save being teased by me !

He goes about
With your letter so,
One word, and he
Could'nt conceal it, Lo !

I forswear such delicacy
Though kind is she,
None dare touch her,
Even when so near she be !

Whose is all this glory,
Whose this splendour and blaze ?
Who can ever tell ?
Who the lowered curtain raise ?

I watch for you and not for death ;
For, death has a date ;
But if you would not come,
Nothing can bring you soon or late.

Such a load shaken off my head,
As I can never pick again !
Such a task set ahead,
As in life I can never attain !

Ghalib, love is a fire
Raging unrestrained,
Neither by wish begun,
Nor by will contained.

I Would Seek A Cure......

I would seek a cure
If there were pain in my heart,
But what to do
When the heart be itself smart ?

I know full how to pray,
But you never hear, what then to say ?
These idols what have they to do with God,
Swear, O' Swear, by the Lord !

Even woe shall bring you joy,
If your heart with pain doth toy ;
Pertness has brought joy to the world of yore,
Display your beauty, display it more.

Enmity up to my faith you have shown,
Now let your friends' upto mine be known ;
Ghalib death comes not to end this strife,
How long more is one to bemoan this life ?

My Love's Glory

My love's glory
Is like of sun at its height
Which puts in shade
The thrill of moon in the night.

She thinks
It's good to get it free ;
So no kiss,
But an eye on heart ever be !

Better than Jum's wine-cup,
Is my earthen-pot ;
For if ever broke,
Another is easily got ;

To get something unasked
Gives a joy two-fold,
Blessed indeed the beggar,
Who never up his hand does hold.

The look of cheer in my face,
As her I see,
Makes her think that the love-sick
Now better be !

Let's see to what good the forlorn
By their loves are led ;
Now that ' 'Tis a good year,'
By a Brahmin has been said.

His pick-axe did
Farhad by Shirin set ;
All art in Man is good
Who's at his best.

As a drop, no more the drop
If by River embraced ;
So good indeed all the work,
That by good end is graced.

O' Lord ! keep Khizar Sultan
Ever in your view
'Tis a lovely fruit in the Royal orchard
Arrived just a-new.

Ghalib, the truth about Paradise
Full well I know ;
But 'tis a good thought for cheer
With heart to go !

When In Separation

When in the pangs of separation
I look at the door or wall;
I look for breeze or a messenger
From her abode to call.

For her to come to my house,
Oh ! the grace of God !
Now I look at her, now my house !
Oh ! My Lord !

Lest their jealousy
Wish her hands and arms ill,
Why should all these people
So my wounded heart with their eyes fill ?

'Tis not diamonds and rubies
That in your headgear do I see,
But my own wounded heart
Which their honour does envy.

Prayer Needs No Rhyme

Prayer needs no rhyme,
Plaint to form prime ;
Why plant the seeds for flowers.
When vine needs no bowers ?

Though Thou art in everything,
Like Thee there is nothing ;
Be not fooled by all this life,
Though with it the world be rife.

Give up joy to evade woe,
Without spring no winter, Lo !
Why shun the wine O' holy Man ;
Tis no 'bees stuff' in honey-can.

Life and death,
All that is nothing Ghalib,
But what's in your breath,
That says ''Tis nothing ?'

Tell Me Now

Each time I speak to you,
You say 'What art Thou' ?
What manner of speech be it ?
You pray tell me now.

Flame hath not that fire,
Lightning not that flash !
Would someone tell me,
What's that love so rash ?

What fear of my rival
Talking ill of me to you !
What makes me jealous,
Is that he at all talks to you.

My tattered clothes with blood
Are so glued to me,
What need for darning,
Can there now be ?

Where the body burned
Heart, too, would have gone;
Why scratch the ashes now ?
For what is the search on ?

I believe not in blood,
That through the veins doth fly,
Unless it drips through well,
And drips through the eye !

What's that so endears
Paradise to me,
Save for rose-wine that
Without limit there be !

I would drink if I see
A few barrels of wine ;
What are these cups and flasks,
That you before me line ?

I have no strength to speak,
And even if I could,
What hope is there, to make
Me say, what I would ?

He is become King's man
So he struts about ;
Else what respect in the city,
Does Ghalib have, in and out ?

Call Me Back

Call me back anytime you wish to be kind,
I am not time past that's ever left behind ;
My rival's jeers in such weakness nothing to complain,
They are not my head that I can not lift in pain !
I do'nt get the poison my cruel love anywhere,
Else, 'tis not forswearing meeting thee, that I can't bear.

Resignation

"How can I hold life
More dear than she ?
For hold I not faith
So dear to me ?

The Cupid's arrow
That with her love my heart did pierce,
Is gone since long,
But not the pain so soft and fierce !

Ghalib you cannot but stand
All this and live ;
I know 'tis terrible
But Life—too dear to give !

A Compliment

Now in love,
For her solitude to seek ;
Compliments my love's way
When haplessly weak.

Everything in this Universe
Slowly to its end does head,
Even the sun bides its time,
Like flame in breeze, its life to shed.

My Heart

'Tis after all a heart, nor brick or stone ;
Why should'nt it fill with pain and smart ?
A thousand times shall I weep, why anyone
Should so torture me, and my poor heart ?

'Tis not temple, nor Kaaba, nor someone's door ;
By the roadside I sit, why should rival tell me : 'go' ?
Dazzling as the noon-day sun, needs she more
Of veil, that thrill to heart, her face, not to show ?

Even Thy reflection dreads to see
Thee with Thy charm and grace ;
Thy looks and smiles like arrows and daggers be,
Wounding and killing to human race !

Pain and sorrow run through life ;
Life and sorrow are prisons alike to man,
None in life to end the unhappy strife,
None but Death to cut the woeful span.

Proud of her beauty, and her power to trust,
She helps save my rival's face, as none she tries ;
I ve self-respect and pride she have must,
How to meet on the way or be called where she lies ?

Well ! she believes not in God she faithless be,
Why should one with love and faith to her go ?
What stands in the way of the world if tattered
Ghalib not be,
Why weep so much then, why cry so aloud now ?

Show Me Not......

Show me not from afar,
The flower-bud, unblown, so !
I ask for a kiss on the lip,
To be shown, so !

Why ask her, how do you
Pinch one's heart ?
Her each gesture shows
The way how to start.

Would that she came
To my house in the night !
Drunk, but not with
My rival by her side.

How spent you the night
There ? as I asked ;
She came and sat before me,
Her eyes angrily talked.

Why not sit quiet
Before her among friends ?
For her silence
To me that very message sends.

I said 'you should make
Strangers from our 'midst go';
The cruel love made me quit,
And said : 'you wished it so' ?

As my love asked :
"How do you lose your sense" ?
There came a whiff of breeze,
Saying : 'So goes it hence !"

The way to live in my love's view,
I did never know,
But wonder of footprints lost
In dust, showed me so.

If you dread a decrease
In attachment my wish to grant ;
Then watch the embracing ocean tides,
Ever anxious, though never in want.

How is Persian poetry better than Urdu ?
Should one ask so ;
Read him out a piece from Ghalib,
And tell him : 'This is how".

I

I am antimony free for all,
My only price be,
Let the eye that uses it,
Gratefully remember me.

Let me weep away my sorrow
O' My cruel love, lest
The griefs within me
On thy face be imprest.

My Heart is too Weak

My heart is too weak
To stand a woe ;
That there is little of wine,
Is enough for it to go.

I shy away from Saki,
To tell her that so it be ;
Else in faith the left-over,
O' wine-glass is enough for me.

Neither an arrow pulled ahead,
Nor a hunter hid behind ;
What complete peace indeed,
In the cage do I find !

What regard for saints
That do but pray
For some return afrer death,
To come their way !

What makes all the wise
So proud ;
That go but the way
Of a crowd ?

Leave me at the '*Zum Zum*',
Why should I go around ;
When my cloak in wine-marks,
So does abound.

How terrible indeed,
If now, too, I cannot have my way !
When I am all afire,
And there be no 'nay' !

'Hold ye back O' Death,
My heart is yet to drip through the eye ;
Stay awhile, hold your breath,
I have too much to do, here to die.

Is there one such who knows
Not Ghalib ? All the same ;
In faith, he's a good poet,
Although one with a bad name.

What !

I to return from the Tavern,
Unsatisfied so !
If I were forsworn to drink,
What was wrong with Saki to go ?

A single arrow now holds
The head and heart in thrall ;
Gone the days indeed,
When nothing did them ever gall.

Fallen on evil days,
No more well off and free, ;
Let's see who aids ye Ghalib,
Now, and how shall it be.

To God

'Away from my Motherland,
Death took me on a foreign soil ;
How kind indeed was God,
My poverty not to expose, my honour not to soil !

She lays a trap for me,
With snares of her hair-coil ;
O' God help me uphold,
My honour, her designs to foil !

Behold

Behold the generosity unlimited
Of the gracious cloud ;
Blister-ridden it covers the world,
And yet is so proud.

The Universe like paper in flame,
Is afire
With my wanderlust,
And my heart's desire.

Love's Tears

Behold like summer-tempests the lovers' tears,
By which the garden-wall many a flower-wears;
None from love of flowers can be free,
Even oak enslaved by flowers be !

I Remember Again

I remember again
The eye drowned in tear,
And my heart leaps up
Quick in prayer !

Hardly had I forgot
The dreadful calamity,
When the thought of thy parting
Sent the old pain to its extremity.

How innocent and simple
My poor heart !
It desires again that cruel love.
So full of art !

Life even as such,
Too, would have passed,
Why did I remember
The path, thou ever crossed ?

What a quarrel shall there be
With Heaven's guard,
Were I to remember there
Thy house ! Oh ! My Lord !

No more the courage !
No more the prayer !
I recall my old heart,
Now finished with care.

My mind goes back
To that old street ;
To discover my heart
Lost in a way so sweet.

Wilderness, wilderness, wildernes in all ;
The wild's expanse to my mind my house doth recall ;
Ghalib in my boyhood as I lifted a stone
To strike at Majnu's head, I remembered my own !

Victim of Love

A place of worship
For the heart-burns I be,
With lips dry such of lovers
As starved to death you see.

All disappointment !
All distrust !
My heart a victim
Of love's faith and trust.

To Her

One look in the mirror,
And she did suddenly start !
How proud indeed had she been,
Of not losing her heart !
Put the bearer not to the sword I pray,
Not he, but I'm to blame, they say.

The Ways Of My Love

The fire of Hell
Has the ways of my love,
Kafir would I be,
If I find not joy in woe ;
What shall I tell
Since when do I in this world move,
Were I to count in
The days af separation also !

So that in life, I may never
Get a wink at night,
She came in dreams, and
Promised to come again !
Let me while the messenger
Returns another letter write,
I know to write back to me
What she shall deign.

Though for it, I
Did ever pine,
When did the brimming cup
Ever come to me ?
Now that Saki before me
Places the wine,
I hold on, lest no poison
Therein be !

One who believes not in faith,
How can she ever be deceived ?
Why should I then
Have doubts about my friend ?

My anxiety in bed
Because of fears of rival conceived
But yours ? Pray,
What be your thoughts' trend ?

To bed my love,
That a Lords' blessing be !
So perturbed, to die
With joy I forgot !
The furrow in the veil
That do I see,
Is but by
A frown within, got.

All one's joys
But in one stolen glance of love,
All one's charm
In one look of anger be ;
I wonder a plaint
That Heavens and earth would move,
Fails to move
Thy Heart and Thee !

Even that spell as would
Make a ship through the sands sail on,
Has not power to secure
But one wish for me !
Ghalib my habit of taking
Wine is long since gone,
Save, when a cloud
Or Moon there be !

Mine Not Love……

Mine not love,
Let it madness be ;
Let my madness
Bring fame to thee.

Sever not off
Your relations with me,
If nothing else
Let enmity there be.

If my company
Doth bring bad name to thee ?
Then not in public,
But in private let us be.

By myself,
I am no enemy !
Let my rival
Have love for thee.

By and through oneself
Should it all be,
Even to efface one's self
If not to discover Thee,

Though life flies through
As though quick sand it be,
There is time yet
To bleed the heart within me.

Do I give up faith
Nay ! never ! let there be

No love, but tortures
Une-ending for me.
O, ye, unjust Heavens,
Give something to me,
Even though leave
To cry and pray it be !

If not to pay heed
Thy nature be,
I will learn even
So, to bow to thee.
Ghalib I should have
Someway my love to tease
Let there be disappointment
And no love's pleasure, if you please !

Music For Her

The flask of wine, the cithars note,
And flute's chime,
Ecstasy to her, and all
Like Spring in its prime ;
Counsel me not my friend
My love's company not to disturb,
For my plaints and sighs turn
Into sweet music, they do'nt her perturb.

For Losing His Heart......

For losing his heart to her,
How can I my courier blame ?
For though a rival now,
He was a man all the same.

It would not come today,
And come it must one day,
What a grudge against death
Do I have, what to say ?

He is there now,
And so every now and then ;
What can I call my love's house,
But a rival's den !

Ah ! The miracle of charm !
So easily am I deceived
Into silence, thinking my mind
By her is well-conceived.

She greets me in the bazaar
Knowing full well,
I, too, know, how can I my mind
To her in public tell !

You have no thought
Of ties of faith, but well,
What is there in my hand,
Could you ever tell ?

My questions make her think
That I am off my mind,
And, in faith, I care not
What answers do they find.

Success in Art
Brings world's troubles to you,
And Art in speech
Their envy ! What is one to do ?
Who said Ghalib is not bad ?
True ! One can't call him but mad !

Love A-filame

The looking-glass, but for its coating,
Would be afire
With the dazzling reflection
Of her blazing looks :
Lovers have flaming beauty
As their heart's desire,
As candle a burning wick
In its side, with cheer does brook.

A Lullaby

Like lullaby to a child
Is Holy Jesus' word
To lovers by love cut deep,
To put them to sounder sleep.

Tongue of Love

Tongue of love
Lies in eyes ;
In silence it talks,
In quiet it prys.

Like a musical instrument
Out of order,
Are plaints of lovers
With love in disorder ;

What gratitude to Majnu
For the miracle wrought,
A garden out of wilderness
By his blood tears is brought !

Regret

Ah ! those who rolled in wealth,
Now in dust do lie
With the dirty earth-insects
Slowly to be eaten by !

'Tis enough while parting
For thee to show me thy bare finger,
For thy memory in my heart
To glow and ever to linger.

With aching heart Ghalib
I write these lines,
None to raise a finger,
Flawless as the sun shines.

She And I

Sô weak am I, were you by your side
To give me a place,
I bet on my life, if one ever could
Tell me by my face !

What wonder if my sight
Cause her to have pity on me,
Would someone take me
To the place where she be !

Show me not your face
If so you will,
But do raise the veil to show the eyes
That so one kill !

So fond is she
Of seeing me in a cage !
Were I to turn her hair,
She would me in her arms engage !

Envy's Thought

I cannot stand my own heart's envy,
I die in the wish, but desire her not to see !
She has something with my rival in view,
Though she passes by as she him never knew ;
You call even Ghalib bad that's not fair.
For it would make love-lust to die in despair.

In Truth

Not that I believe not
In the fact of judgment-day,
But tortures of Hell pass not
That away from love falls my way !
Though the day had no cloud in the sky
What's wrong with the Moon-lit night
For wine with joy to pass by,
Quench the thirst, and set oneself right ?

When I appear before her,
There no welcome be !
When I go from her,
She wishes me no good-bye !
And perchance if she ever
Remembers me, 'Tis to say :
"Today no quarrels and fights
Among the people do I espy" !

One gets wine on days
Other than of Id,
Beggar of Tavern's street
Without hope can never be ;
Let there be joys and sorrows,
Them why should I heed ?
When God has given me a heart
Wherein no joy do I see ?

Ghalib why should
You her remind
Of the promises
She ever made ?
What if having known
Your mind, she says :
'That I remember not
Of having ever said ?

Reality

Even if one
Lives upto judgment-day,
Death in the end
Has to fall his way.

Fed upon my blood,
My love calls
Heart 'giver of life' and
To it ever falls !

With all the martyrs
Of faith on the way,
What but 'lucky thou art !
Long live !' can I say ?

Ghalib if I lack sense
World's reality to discern,
There is enough in its un-reality
Ever to hold my concern !

Carefree

I care not, love or hate let it be,
But pray do that all unto me ;
Weakess now has me in such a state
Where even thoughts of love I a burden rate !
I begrudge mention of my rival by thee,
Even though by way of complaint it be ;
They say there is a cure for every smart,
But were it so, wo'nt there be a cure for the heart ?
Even in such distress none's help do I seek,
Lord upholds my honour though so do I speak !
Man unto himself is a world of thought ;
Solitude with me anon into multitude is wrought.
Freedom does mean to be free
Not from strife, but only from ye ;
One with his life can never be content,
Even though in prayers be it spent ;
Ghalib, I'll never quit that trouble-maker's door
Though it bring Heavens upon my head and even
more.

For Her

Why should'nt my heart's idol have concern
For its own good to overlook those who for her sight
do yearn ?
Ah ! The irony of Fate, now that she comes to slay me,
She comes with a sword so sharp as me will never
let her see !
The beauty of flowers mirrors before my mind :
My charming love, so radiant, fine and kind !

Even in Spring

The doors and walls of my woe-beridden house
Stand even in the midst of Heavenly Spring
Down-cast, though clad in their green blouse :
What woes indeed would autumn to them bring !

Now I wish to be alone, all alone,
To course through the winding path of life ;
What tortures at friend's hands have I known !
What pitfalls faced through their unseemly strife !

Woe With Freemen

Woe with free-men does no more than a moment, last ;
They lighten with lightning their abode with troubles cast !
As the gamblers count their cards before the game they start,
I turn over the pleasures of days gone by in my poor heart ;

Though Man unto himself is a word of thought,
His life like of moth at night, is naught ;
Not content but weakness, my heart doth blame,
Makes me give up life's struggle, for Man an everlasting shame !
A thousand desires unfulfilled my heart doth hold,
What then to call it but a prison hard and cold ?

She Swears

She swears never more to torture me,
But says : 'How can I show my face to thee' ?
The very Heavens move in a cycle day and night,
Something is bound to happen, why should I take fright ;
Were it enmity I could that for love take,
But when it nothing why should I let that myself rake ?
Why do I along with the messenger go, ?
Oh God ! Am I myself to deliver my letters now ?
Why should I quit my love's threshold,
Though it call for being paved with my blood.
I passed all my life waiting for death,
After death, let's see what faces my breath ?
She asks 'who is this Ghalib ?' well,
'What am I to say ?' Could someone tell ?

Of God

As Lord grants not my prayer in any task,
Let me now a long life for Khizar ask !
Move not out in search of God, O' Holy man,
Such uneven thoughts can never cover that span.
To bed one's love is a joy unbound,
But to wait that long, where the heart so sound ?
Even after lovers' death, Sun's glorious light
Makes their parts, still aflame with desire, shine as stars bright ;
Ghalib ask me not about the expanse of love's tavern,
All I know 'tis far more than that of Heaven !

When She Got Ready

When she got ready
Her journey to start ;
All along the way,
I threw a piece of my heart.

The wise in wonder
Did in the mirror behold
A dove at once wounded,
Panting, warm and cold !

My fears turn my heart,
Into a battle-field
Of hope and despair,
To fight anew or to yield ?

Ghalib as of my will
I could never my thoughts express ;
However much I ever tried
The river within its bounds to compress !

And Why Not ?

Why shall not the earth be proud
Of being trampled over by king's men ?
Why shall not her fame spread and mystery shroud
That stunning beauty whom kings come to see now and then ?
No craving for a walk in the garden for me ;
But why not enjoy the spring air that there be ?

Come my Love

Come O' my love, I can stand it no more,
No more strength to bear the pangs, Ah ! No more !
I give up Heaven for worldly life,
For with such pleasure and wine 'tis never rife !
My tears make me from ye to go,
Ah me ! I could never check them so !
No grudge need ye fear from me,
For no grudge in lovers' nature ever be.
All the joys of life are hid in your inner heart ;
Seek not pleasure in world, here flowers with Spring do part.
You agree to put me to sword ! Lucky am I !
But how unlucky, if your word you were not to stand by !
Ghalib you swear by wine never more to drink ;
But to take you at your word my heart does shrink !

In Woe

So much bent am I
With the woes of life,
That my eyes even with clothes
Appear in strife !
My wounds I stitch,
Only to increase their pain !
And not to soothe them,
Myself from that thought I do refrain.
With that rose in their midst
The garden to adorn,
Buds with cheer bloom into flowers,
To advance and grace the morn.

Love is an Enemy

Love in any case is happiness' enemy,
Qais is ever painted nude, a shame to be !
My heart though small gladly the wound did greet,
But the arrow wounding spurted out, did'nt act as meet !
Flower's fragrance, Heart's plaint, Lamp's smoke,
Whoever came from thee came upset, in pain, and broke !
Lord gave my heart all the woes of its choice,
But I had few friends with me therein to rejoice !
Such love for difficulties, such strength of will !
Ah ! I find even this task so easy, myself to kill ;
Not a drop once Ghalib, but now like summer-tempests the tears,
That come down, as my heart no more my counsel bears.

He

Blessed with both the worlds,
I was pleased He thought ;
But in faith my modesty kept me quiet,
As nothing more I sought !
At every stage on to Him,
A few in despair did drop ;
With His place ever so unknown,
What could they do but stop ?
Who does not have sympathy
For the candle that so does burn ;
But what to do, when love
Everyone so does turn ?

Once Again

'Tis an age I had my love my house to grace,
And with her looks and charms to illumine the place;
The broken pieces of my heart again I put together,
For 'tis an age I looked into eyes that did them
shatter ;
I feel suffocated again with restraint and care,
For 'tis years that I in madness my clothes did tear !
Each breath once again emits a plaint afire,
For long have I yearned for feast of lights to admire !
Love is astir again to cure the wounds of my heart
With hundred different salts to ease their smart !
Once more I fill my eyes with heart's blood,
Gaily to colour my clothes with tears I shed !
My heart and eyes do once again into rivals turn,
With thoughts of my love and her sight to imagine !
My heart yearns again for a round of the place
Of humiliation, subduing my sense and grace !
Once again I look for love to enslave, and live
With heart, sense, and very life to give ;
Each lily and rose does once again me excite,
And my look and thoughts to sweet beauties invite ;
Once again I want to open my love's note,
Pledging my life to the sight of that she wrote !
Passion again desires someone atop the house,
With hair loose on her face without a grouse ;
Once again I seek someone me to confront
With dagger-eyes sharp with antimony, as her wont ;
My eye once again yearns for one with charm and
grace,
Drunk with rose-wine, outdoing flowers' beauty in her
face ;
Once again at someone's door I wish to lie
Ever beholden to the guard that there stands by !

My heart looks again for those free days
To sit lost in thoughts of my love, and her ways ;
Ghalib tease me not, for again I am bent
Upon creating a storm, with tears unspent !

Where Now !

Where now the pangs of separation !
Where the thrills of meeting !
Where the day's and night's creation !
Where the month's and year's greeting !

No more the time for love !
No more the eye for charm !
Gone the mind that did rove
Dead the heart, once so warm !

What madness now there can be ?
It was all with the thoughts of one ;
That vivacious imagination within me,
Which is now so cruelly undone.

To shed blood is no joke,
Upto it where's the will or heart ?
Gone the old love gambler's yoke,
For gamble, where's the stuff to part ?

Lost am I in the cares of world !
Though poles apart do we stand ;
Ghalib, worn out all my parts as of an old bird,
Where the strength now them to band !

Her Each Gesture has a Meaning Twofold

Her each gesture has a meaning two-fold,
Even sign of love bespeaks of scold !
Oh God ! She does not, nor shall ever understand me,
Give her another heart, if not me another tongue,
I pray thee !
What link has her look with that eye-brow to dart ?
There's some other bow to shoot an arrow straight
to heart ;
With you in the city, what fear need there be for my
heart ?
Life and heart here per your wish are easily bought !
Though an expert idol-breaker have become I,
An unbroken idol in my path shall ever lie !
I die to hear that voice even though my head be off,
But I would only she oft shout to have it struck off !
The world mistakes it for the all-powerful sun,
As a new heart-burn a day I show to everyone !
I would have lived in peace,
Had'nt I lost my heart to you ;
But I would have lived in woe,
Had'nt I died for you.
Obstruction raises flowing waters high
Check on my feelings makes them still higher fly.
There is many a famous poet in the world ;
But Ghalib, 'tis said, is different in style and word.

Love

The flowers laugh
At the ways of the night-warbling bird,
For the thing called love,
Is for madness but another word.

Love's Tortures Herald......

Leve's tortures herald peace for one's mind,
As no new way of torture Heaven can now find !
Let my beloved's eye need all my blood,
I should keep some mine own to flood ;
O' Khizar, ours' the real life that world does face
Not yours, though eternal, ever hid in that place.
Even in such calamity, I 'm beset by the envious
thought,
That such calamity by you for one and all is wrought !
O' Lord ! keep me not from the slayer at such length;
I am not the anly one to try his measure and
strength ;
My will for freedom as of a bird encaged
That still in collecting straws for his nest is engaged;
Taking me for a beggar, a placid look from the
guard' did me greet,
But as ill-luck would have it, I advanced and held
his feet !
A Ghazal's canvas hardly enough to display my
thought,
A much wider field for cover by me is sought !
The world, the Lord with pleasure for Tajjmal
Hossain Khan did fill,
But made others share 'em lest they in envy wish
him ill ;
Whose name comes upon my tongue O, God !
That my palate kisses it in homage, O, my Lord !
Defender of Faith, and for nation a warrior meet,
The very Heavens in obeisance do him greet !
The whole universe in his reign bedecks itsef anew,
Even the Heaven puts new stars on the view !
The praise yet unfinished, but paper's end do I find,
The ocean needs a vast expanse to have it confined.
These lines by Ghalib in special measure are writ
A beacon and guide to all with feel and wit.

I Know Your Mind

You say you'll not return it, if my heart you find,
Where's the heart to lose ? But well I know your mind !
Love unto me the very joy of life has brought,
A cure for the pain, a pain without cure, all unsought !
She to friend my rival ! Lost is my faith in love !
Sighs of no avail, plaints none do ever move !
Simple and carefree ! Oh ! that be but a cloak of art
For beauties to try how daring one in his love does start.
The blooming of flowers brings to my mind,
A heart bleeding, a heart lost, forever left behind ;
I know not myself, how my heart does fare ;
Save I look for it, and you do it oft ensnare !
Priest's counsel for me, like salt on a wound,
Would one ask him what joy therein he has found ?

Your Silence Holds......

Your silence holds a bewitching charm,
Your look a feel so soft and warm !
Dew in garden but squeezed out of breeze
By flower-buds, that did it in crushing embrace seize ;
Ask not of your lovers' eye-wounds, deep and wide,
They are destined in their hearts forever to bide.

I Fear

I fear lest my love for ye make me proud,
Cut my life and my thoughts with enmity shroud
Ghalib unless flowers cover the whole view,
Take not spring in its prime, 'tis yet a-new.

Thoughts in Despair

Each time I open out my heart,
You say, "what's it that you seek' ?
Pray tell me now, when you say so,
How and what is one to speak ?

Ask me not with such jeer again
'Cruel am I' ?
For I am wont to say to all
You say, 'Aye'!

Even though like a knife,
Once through my heart,
Why should'nt I call that look
A look of love, to start ?

An arrow's prick
Of little pleasure for my mind
'Tis only in wounds cut by sword
That such joy do I find !

Even if one turns an enemy
You should never turn so,
Even if one speaks ill of you,
You should never let yourself go.

Now I write of dreaded ailments
That do me kill,
Now with complaints of ill-suiting
Reliefs my epistle do I fill !

Anon the lack of patience do I bewail !
Anon I talk of woes unending that do me assail !

Blessed the sword that cuts one in twain,
Blessed the murder that makes life its end to gain,
Though unloving, yet she is your love,
Speak of her charms, sing of ways she does move ;
Even though spring bide here but a while,
There's enough in the air and flowers to praise and
smile !

When the ship has weathered the rock,
And in safety the shore doth again,
Why should I then Ghalib,
To God of Captain's ills complain ?

My Heart Had to Clear

My heart had to clear the debt
Of her eyes, with tears of blood !
And all broken, 'tis now beset
With griefs for desires that did it flood.
Drag me through the street now that I'm dead,
In life, too, I was ever moved by wander-lust ;
Mirage of faith in love, like dread
Of sword hanging that fall and cut you must !
I took love lightly, its misery and pain
Were less than the worldly woes, I thought,
But now that I am through all loss and gain,
I find world's woes before love are naught !

My Fate

Without my shedding a tear
My house wilderness would have known,
Ocean if not an ocean,
Wilderness would have shown.

Why complain of heart
If it in troubles be caught ?
Woe-beridden and restless
Would it be , were it not.

Would that Heavens keep
On my love's door their own guard !
For after an age of worship
Alone, the'd let me in there O' Lord !

Sneer Not At Me

Sneer not at me
If now in Kaaba do I stay,
For know I not
My debt to Temple-colleagues, I say.

Lest one to worship be impelled
By heavenly wine and honey's urge,
I would that someone
Had Heaven in Hell to merge !

Why the path of piety do I shun ?
My form from its start was wrongly spun.
Ghalib, my efforts can bring me no rnturn
Safe from locusts, lightning my fields would burn.

To Bed My Love...

To bed my love was not my happy lot ! .
Had I lived more, for that would have yearned my heart
Lived I by your promise ? Nay I knew it was false,
For had I believed it, had'nt joy had me in a hearse ?.

From your delicacy, I knew
Your word would its character take ;
Were you but strong of will,
You could that never break.

Ask of my heart about the dart
From your eye, pulled at half the measure ;
Had it pierced through it all,
How could I know such pricking joy and pleasure ?

Each one of my friends to turn a counsel !
What sort of friends they be ?
Would that someone were to tend my wounds,
Some share the griefs within me.

Were a stone to have
Some of the woes of my heart,
An unending stream of blood
Would from it soon start !

Though pain and sorrow cut through life,
'Tis but heart's lot,
But for woes and griefs of love,
T roubles of life would it spot.

Whom shall I tell,
What's an eve ful of love's grief ?
Love unreturned, but death in life,
Not the mortal death, so brief !

Neither a funeral bier to take,
Nor a tomb my grave to crown,
Such disgrace in death !
Oh ! Why did'nt I in a river drown ?

He is Unique,
None can Him ever see ;
None his rival,
None can ever be.

Such mystic thoughts, Ghalib !
Such style and word !
Would take ye for a prophet,
If thou not a drunkard wert !

Caution

Your presence sets the garden a-fire,
Flower-buds that bloom only to embrace you desire ;
Your indifference unto me
Ever on the increase,
My sighs and plaints move
But in vain, you to please !

Each new heart-burn now a beacon be ;
Counselling restraint and patience unto me !

To Friends

Of what help can friends be in my woe ?
Before the wound heals won't the nails grow ?
It passes all limits now O' ye kind-heart,
How long shall I open my heart only to hear 'what' !
My heart and eyes all welcome for the priest !
But to preach what would he come, tell me at least.
Today both with a coffin and sword to her I go,
What reason not to slay me, can she have now ?
I care not if the Holy priest does me imprison,
Can it end love's madness that within me is risen ?
Why shall I run from chains when so enslaved by hair,
Such willing love of faith, how can a prison's bars fear ?
Ghalib 'tis town is famished in love's treat,
Agreed I will live in Delhi, but what shall I eat. ?

A Word

For whose masterly stroke
Does each creation so stand in prayer ;
Clad in robes of paper,
Supplicant in the universe, everywhere ?
Ask not of love's anguish when all alone,
To pass eve till morn, like cutting a canal through the stones !
See how my love for death does as a magnet serve,
Even to the sword which outside its sheath does curve ;
Try howsoever much you may,
You shall never get a word of what I say ;
Even in prison Ghalib is burnt with that desire,
And his chains turn like hair-coil in a fire.

My Plight

When I have built my house opposite thine,
Won't ye even now know which is mine ?
Now that I'm left with no more strength to speak,
She says : "Unless you speak, how can I know what
you seek ?"
Ah me ! I have with her to deal,
Who's called the world-over as a tyrant with a zeal !"
I have nothing in my mind, else I
Not to spare the word, even if I were to die.
The worship of that idol, in my life I'll never forego,
Even if the world call me a kafir and ever so !
Of your charms and looks, one cannot talk
But as swords and daggers, that do one stalk !
Even when of God and saintly things do we converse ;
We cannot help mention of wine and glass in verse,
If I am deaf all the more reason for you to be sweet ;
For I cannot hear a word unless you do it repeat,
Ghalib you need not open out your heart again and
again,
All is already known to the king without you to
explain.

On Death-Bed

Wine is further reddened by the touch of your lip,
The cup of wine, like bee unto flowers, honey to sip !
I would I had Lord my longing to bless,
For long I yearn for quiet in sleep to caress !
With dew in its ear, how can the flower
Hear the Nightingale above in the bower ?
Ye faithless come to Asad now that he does on death-
bed lie,
'Tis time to bid reason, face, and pride all a good-bye.

In Her Company

No thought of one's self respect can there be,
I sat quiet before her though everyone so did point at
me !
It was after all a heart, it with guard's dread did fill,
Else I not to pass thy house without a call at my will.
Both my cloak and beggar's bowl for wine do I pawn
For 'tis an age I've known that bliss on me to dawn.
However long the life to it you can never be fair,
Even Khizar would say 'Ah what still remains there !
I would ask the earth if I had leave to,
What did it with such treasures do ?
My rivals, when did they not me blame ?
My foes, when did they not me name ?
She may not have got this habit
From my rival O' God
She gives me a kiss unasked
And ever so, Oh ! my Lord !
'Tis another thing if she wills so,
But her's not a nature unkind,
For I have known her keep many a word,
That had wholly passed her mind !
Ghalib tell me even if she heard your tale, to say,
What reply do you expect to get of her, I pray ?

A Groan

Such charming thing in my rival's lap brings to my
mind,
The beauty of peacock but with his unseemly feet !
In my wonder a cause for pleasure you find,
But my woes to lay bare call for a nature sweet.
I wish love would me into a flame turn
Such as of candle-wick, with joy to burn.

Thou Tyrant

Thou tyrant, thou never anyone's friend wert,
So cruel art thou to others, as thou to me never
wert !
Like Atta's moon* be this sun,
Before the blazing looks of my loving one !
As high does one will, so high would he soar,
The drop if a tear would turn a pearl no more,
Till at her heavenly face did I gaze,
I never thought calamity could one so eraze !
I'm cheered even by the anger she does me show
For that lets me once again to her bare my woe ;
The world's sea of sin was but so shallow
As could not even my shirt's end swallow.
Asad for long I've had pleasure in the fire of my heart;
A fire that long before *samandir, of its own accord
did start !

Her Indifference

I love her indifference,
For broader my out-look be,
When I find the joy of my heart
So hid from me !

Flasks full of wine in the Tavern show,
Few with love of wine to it did ever go,
So, the more men in the world you find,
The fewer there are firm of will or mind.

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* Atta's Moon. A moon created by the ancient scientist Atta which exploded after two months.

* Samandir. An insect taking its life from fire of long standing.

The Spin of Life

Not all but only a few
As roses and lies do grace
This world after death,
What fair faces still lie hid in the place !

I too once knew
All the pleasures and joys of the world,
But now they all to
Remote recesses of my mind do herd !

The seven celestial sisters stood veiled all the day,
What caused 'em at night to have such bare display ?
Though Yakub did Yusuf in prison never meet,
His eyes as holes id walls did him ever greet.

Enmity towards their rivals
By all without exception is got,
But Zulekha is pleased to find her friends,
At the sight of Yusuf, so lost !

On this night of grief,
Let blood flow freely from the eye ;
I will take my eye-balls
For candles, through darkness to pass by !

In Heaven I'll take full revenge
Upon these sons of fairies fair,
If by grace of God,
I find 'em turn as '*Houries*' there.

His the pleasures of night ;
His the sleep, his the pride ;
Around whose neck you sight
Your hair loose in amour, there to bide.

My visit to the garden
Like of teacher to school be,
The Nightingales on hearing my plaints,
Begin their warbling with glee !

Why do these half-closed eyes
So pierce through my heart;
Like arrows that from my ill-luck
Do take their start?

Though I tried my best
My sighs to suppress,
Like threads in darning,
Up did they ever press.

Even if I get there
What shall I have her scolds, to say ?
When all my words and prayers
With her guard, I have lost on the way.

The cup of wine
Is the cup of life ;
Whoever has it,
With pleasure is rife.

A believer am I,
I wish all shapes and forms be gone;
For shorn of them, all
Faiths and beliefs turn into one.

Woe ceases to be woe
If it does man oft' hound,
So many my difficulties, Lo !
They've their own solution found !

Mark ye the people of the world,
If Ghalib did ever so weep;
A deathly wilderness would
Over all these cities soon creep.

No Charm For Me.

No charm in the pleasures of world for me,
Save bleeding my heart but no blood there be !
Like a bird without strength to wing,
I hope a whirl would, after death, me to Heavens fling!
For whose welcome so adeck be this site
With flowers? Not a speck of earth to sight !
I should take pity on myself if not she,
For no force to move in my plaints there be.
Not a drop of wine but the thoughts of spring,
Still the drunkards such maddening joy do bring.
By love's love to plunder I'm put to shame ;
Save for yearning, nothing of mine to name !
Ghalib, my lines are now writ only the world to please.
There's no use in your style art and depth to seize.

The Woes of Night

The woes of night add to the darkness that my house
does fill,
A candle alone bespeaks of the morn, but that stands
so still !
Neither sight of beauty to view, nor promise of love's
sleep to hear,
For long there has been such peace 'twixt my eye
and ear !
Wine causes that beauty's modesty therein to drown,
My passions have leave themselves to be shown !
Mark the pearl around the beauties' neck,
And jeweller's rise to stars from lowly speck ;
Quiet pervades the tavern of my thought beside,
Such wine in view, such yearning eye and such Saqi
to provide ;
Hark ye the new-comers in the field of love,
If wish of wine and song do ye move ;
Mark me, if you heve a discerning eye,
Hear me if you've ear for word to go by ;
The beauteous Saqi robs you of faith and reason,
The enchanting music gets your mind out of season ;
At night there are flowers all arround,
And Saqi flits to sweet music's sound ;
The one so pleasing to the eye,
The other so thrilling for one to try !
The day dawns to find it all gone,
None to play, none to dance, none to cheer, none ;
A candle alone is there with heart-burn's of love's
grief,
But even that stands so still, and speaks so brief !
From the unknown Ghalib, such thoughts do I get,
Sound of my scribbling is by angel's music set !

'Tis for you

'Tis for you to know my rival,
But what's wrong if you care for me ?
Trial for you the Judgment-day's arrival,
You a witness though the rival killer be !

Be you not but like the Moon or Sun,
Are they too, so unjust and unfair ;
Lest this by someone's look may have been done,
I die to see a thread astir in her veil there ;

For what place do I care when no more the bar ?
Be it a mosque, school or tomb to drink ,
With all the praise of paradise from near and far ;
I think it aright, but would it were a place with ye to wink.

'Tis of little import, they say,
If there no Ghalib be ;
But for my king and the world, I pray,
They were here forever, all to see !

Hapless

With feet, pricked by thorns, on my knee,
I sit in the wild, hapless it to see !
With me in bed, her each hair doth know
The throbbing state of my heart and ever so ;
My heart with 'plaints does overflow,
'Tis better you touch me not among people so !

A World of Glamour

A world of glamour to behold,
Were I but to raise my eye ;
But where is the will or strength,
Such dazzling sight to stand by ?
Love's madness calls for stones to be thrown
At lover by children, his debt to them to be known !
Even the walls bend under the weight of labour so !
Do not ye homeless to them for shelter go !
Either put me not with envy to such shame,
Or let the world openly your charms and smiles
claim.

A-new

Everything in the garden
Today is arranged a-new ;
Even the outer-gate like dove's helter,
To keep the world out of view !

Each breath of mine today
Brings forth a piece of broken heart,
Effect ensnared by sighs ;
For my love, 'tis but a new start !

Clear out all ye cares,
And love for joy and rest,
To drown the walls and doors
With tears today I am set.

Neither joy's Note

Neither joy's note nor cheer's strain,
I play but to my own failure's refrain !
You are so lost in doing your hair,
And I in future's thought and worldly care !
Such secrets laid bare by my heart
Show how thin my claim to patience wert !
'Tis love for the hunter that does me so hold,
Else there's strength enough, the snares to unfold !
I wish to God that she would someday,
For yearning, give me leave to have my way !
Her one look of cheer would the dead revive,
But who could ever that look of anger survive ?
Now no more the blood in my heart
That so dripped through the eye with its smart.
With you in the open view,
I would ever bow to you !
What's wrong there, if you ask for me ?
For I'm but poor, and you kind to the poor be ;
Asadullah Knan is dead now, Ah, me !
What a fine man and lover of beauty was he !

What Shall I Become

Were I to become a plaint
Even the mount would me return,
What shall I become then,
Say ye the fire that within me does burn !
Ever in mourning in the cage do I lie
A new life would begin were I from here to fly.

New Problem

Now 'tis not my problem how to talk to her,
But what to do when nothing does her stir ?
To bed my love, but a thought with me,
'How to have her, and if not where to flee ?
My passions with my regards for her in strife,
And she so bashful ! What to hope in life ?
If all tha world, my love, were like you,
What would the poor lovers have to do ?
At the sight of your own looks in the mirror
You do so start ;
Were there one or two more like you,
How would it affect your heart ?
With such dark fortune as mine to fall his way
Why would one not call even night the day ?
I've again hopes of her, and she regards for me;
But when not even in her thoughts, how would it be ?
I was not wrong your word would solace my heart
But my eye so yearning, how to cure its smart ?
Mark her eye and darts, then tell
How can one with all that have peace, well.?
I am not mad Ghalib, but as the king does say,
Away from love, how can you have peace, I pray ?

Ask Me Not

Ask me not about my complaints, I pray,
There is wild-fire hid in my heart ;
But blessed even these woes and pains they say
For death must make you even with life part !

None But Qais

None but Qais dared into desert appear;
Perhaps the green-eyed monster none else could bear?

All my heart-burns, with my worries so did go,
As though 'twere all a sham, the world to show!
Asleep I was all joy with you,
Awake I had none to look to!
I am yet a child in the school of love,
Saying what comes before and what passes above;
My coffin in death my fault does cover,
Else my dress in life was a blot all-over
Asad, Farhad couldn't kill himself but with an axe,
How much customs and ways old did him vex!

Such Blaze

Such blaze of beauty would make the reason sink
Each time she her dazzling eye at one would wink;
However touched up to the mirror you may go,
Blots of words unkept would there ever show;
Such strength of faith, but such want of love!
As one in spring with feigned joy would move!
Lose not your love in passion's strife,
In faith and care find the real life.

To Self

Mercury helps brighten the looking glass,
But the mercury of my heart helps me not!
Blooming of flowers but a sign for them to pass,
Spring about to go, let's Nightingale quit the spot!

My Bed Knows the Flame

My bed knows the flame that within me does burn,
My head a woe to the pillow, my body into lead
does turn ;
The pride of my heart — my tear-to desert flows
Forlorn and wreck, my heart for solace to sleep goes ;
How fortunate indeed that you come to me
Like light in darkness, to lighten woes for me;
Ah ! The pangs of separation ! Ah, the griefs' storm !
Threads of my sheets, like embers round me swarm !
My pillow still wears the perfume by her used,
A shame to dream ! Sleep by my eye is refused !
What shall I tell ye Ghalib,
How away from my love do I bide ,
For then each thread of cloth
Turns like a thorn in my side !

Lest I be the Cause.

Lest my plaints and sighs should have caused this
smart,
I do penance to hear her sick with a high-pounding
heart !
She seeks but lover's eye wherein her to see,
Not much ! But what room for tortute there be !

Frankly Speaking

Ask me not for heart-wounds' cure,
They further-wounding diamond must endure !
At long last you, in your indifference unto me,
Give me what not a look, but more than a look be !

She Loves Holy String

Ah ! She loves turning beads on Holy-string,
As she loves to have so many hearts to her cling !
Such want of hope, for life a new joy does bring,
When Heavens such calamities in my favour do swing !
Her stroll in the garden 'cause of her desire to espy
Lovers welter in pain, flowers in dust to lie;
Congratulations Asad, there comes your friend,
With diamonds and jewels your wounds to tend !

A Wail

The fear of my rival
Lets me not lose my head !
Ah the control over myself,
That I can never shed !
My heart so bemoans
Surviving Love's single flame;
That within me rages
Still so, and ever the same;

Why So Mad

The noisy waters foreshadow a storm,
My heart turns wild and sad;
Wine astir in flask, air in the tavern so warm ;
Whose one look charming makes them all so mad?

Love For Me

Mere threat took his life who for battle wasn't fit,
Love always needs a man with strength and grit ;
The fear of death did me so assail,
That in life too I was ever pale !
Though yet a child in the field of love,
I write such lines my merit to prove !
My heart now bleeds with woe,
That like flower in bloom was ever so !
One with woes of life can never part,
A new smart is there if you lose your heart.
Even the prison for this madness finds no cure,
The charms of the wild do still me lure !
This corps without coffin,
That of poor Asad be;
May Lord's peace be on him,
For such a free man was he !

I Could Never

I could never give her due praise,
For her each gesture a heavenly death would raise !
Her curls like eyes that do watch
In innocence a heart, only it to catch !
Mine a wounded heart so full of plaints of woe,
But yours so cruel and hard, deaf to it, ever so !
Ye cruel one, I pray in the name of Heaven's above,
Cause me not to have such doubts about your love.

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